

THE Atlantic



APRIL 2004

THE CASE AGAINST PERFECTION

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ENGINEERING

BY MICHAEL J. SANDEL

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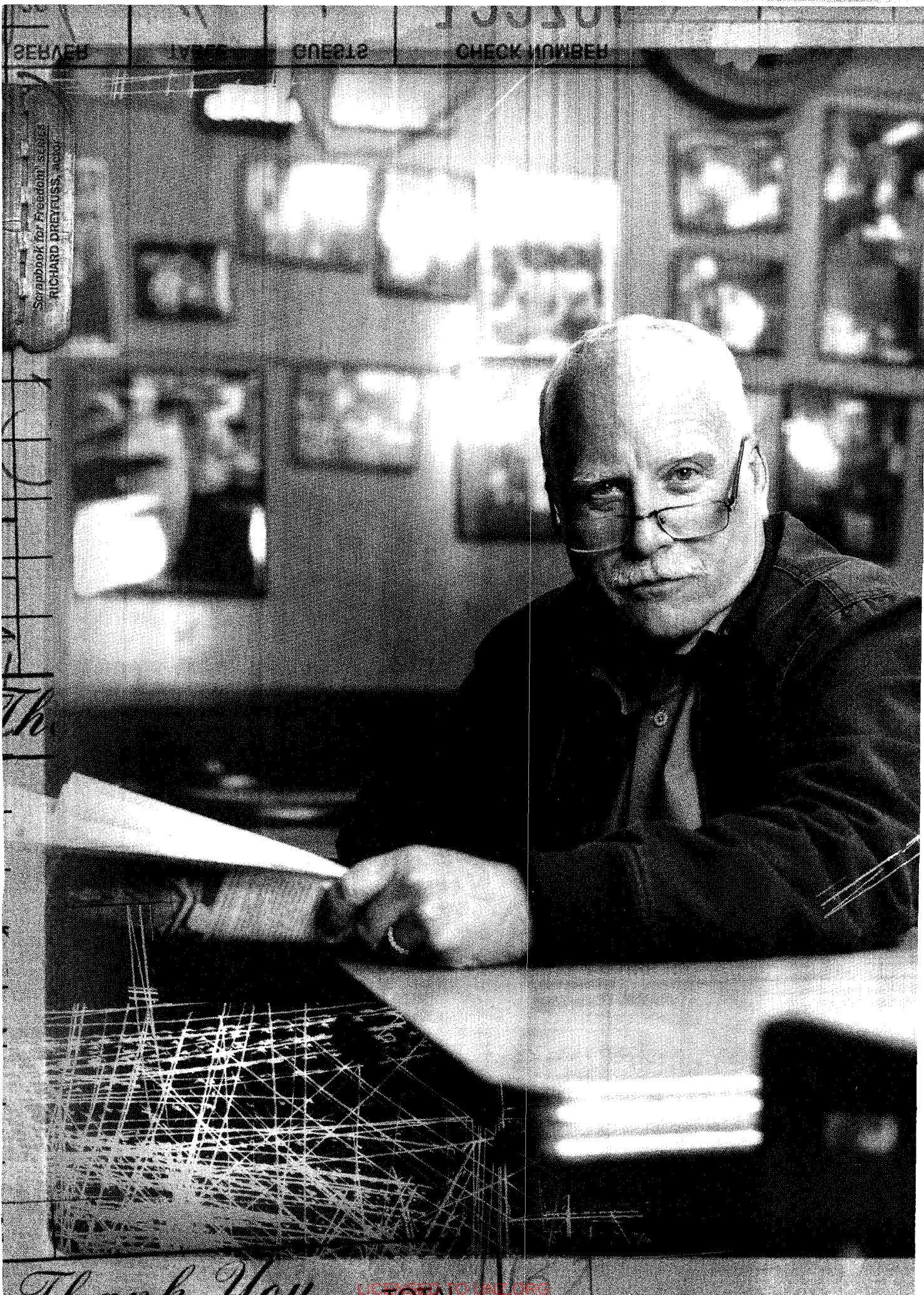
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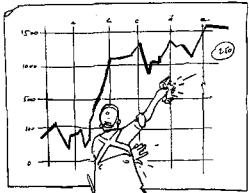
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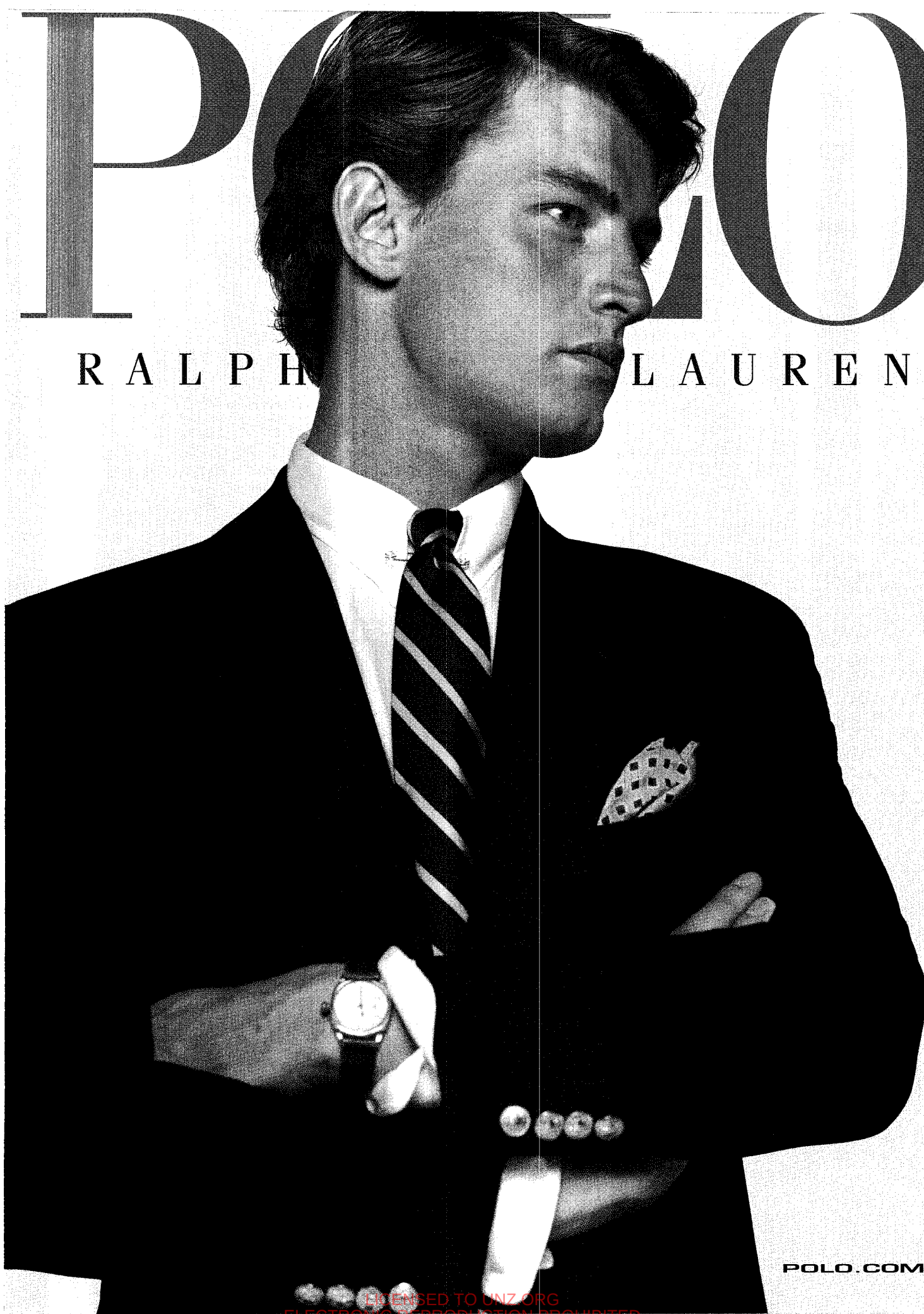
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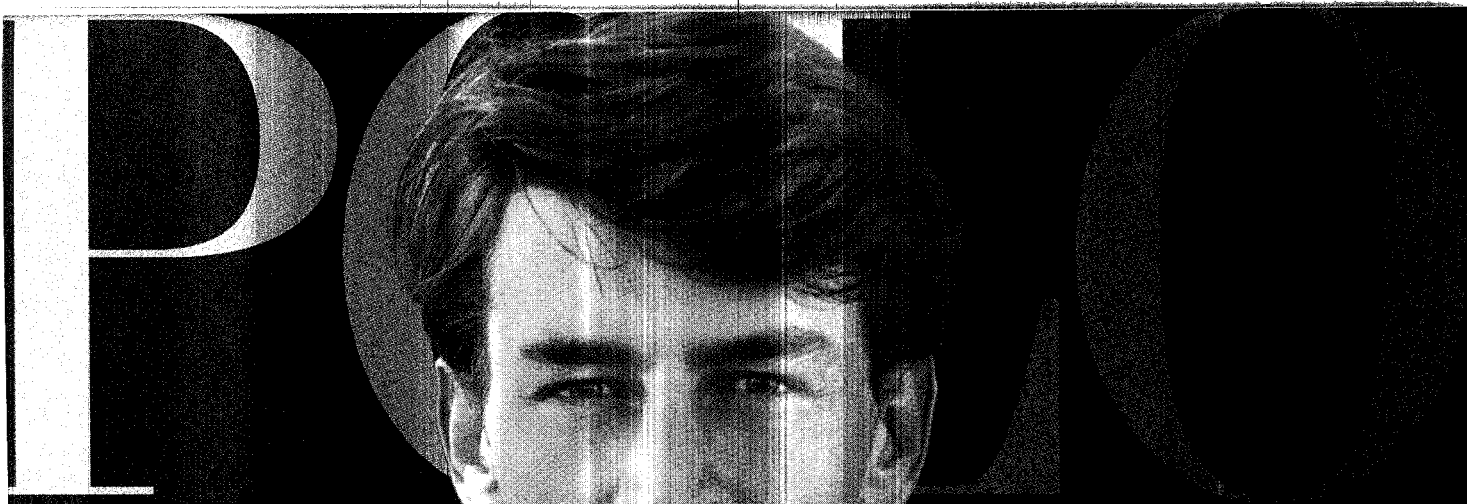
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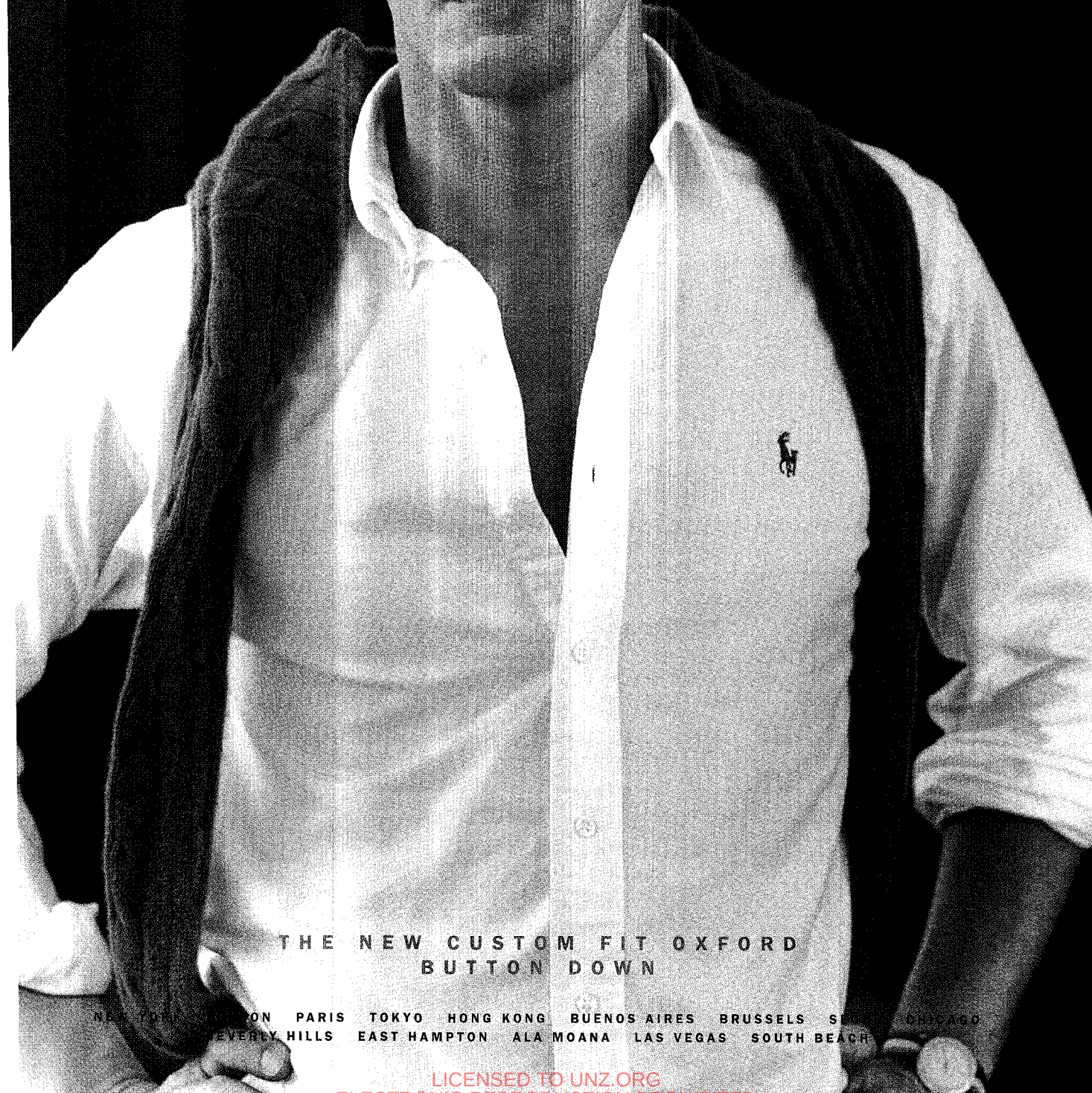


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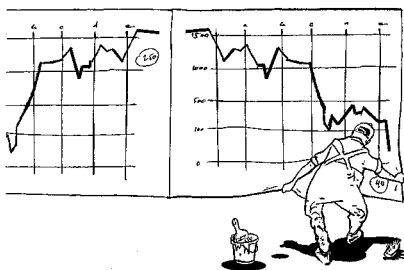
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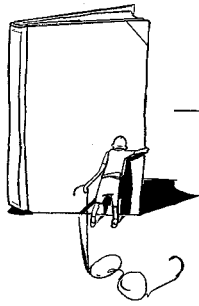
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At the time of his tragic death, at forty-six, Michael Kelly had already packed several lifetimes' worth of accomplishments and triumphs into a relatively short career." So begins an essay in this issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* by Robert Vare, who was Michael Kelly's editor at *The New York Times Magazine* and *The New Yorker* before Kelly came to *The Atlantic*, in 1999. Mike was killed a year ago this April on the outskirts of Baghdad while covering the Iraq War for this magazine—an assignment that he expected would yield a sequel to *Martyrs' Day*, his extraordinary and award-winning account of the 1991 Gulf War. We will never have that book; all that remains of the ambition are several dozen notebooks filled with penciled observations whose meaning is obscured by lack of context and atrocious handwriting. But thanks to the efforts of Vare, who is a senior editor at *The Atlantic*, and of Kelly's wife, Max, we will have another book instead—a collection of articles and columns to be published this month by the Penguin Press, under the title *Things Worth Fighting For*. The book includes an editor's foreword by Vare and an introduction by the *Nightline* anchor Ted Koppel. The latter traveled with Mike while both were embedded with the Third Infantry Division, during the last five weeks of Mike's life—enjoying “the chaste equivalent of a shipboard romance,” as Koppel describes the time he spent in Mike's company. It was Koppel who brought Mike's personal effects, including those notebooks, back to his family. He writes:

The sacrifices that both Michael and I had imposed on our wives and children had been the subject of one long, late-night conversation in the desert. Many marriages in our profession don't survive the separations and the accumulated pressures of lengthy and dangerous assignments. We marveled at the enormous generosity and toughness of our wives and how fortunate we were in the freedom they had given us. There's never a truly equitable payback, but as we talked that night, I don't think it occurred to either of us that Michael might be denied even the opportunity to try.

Readers who know Mike Kelly's work mainly through his monthly column in these pages, or through his weekly newspaper column syndicated by *The Washington Post*,

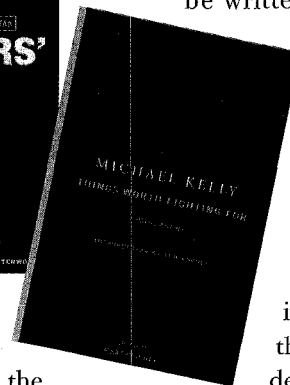
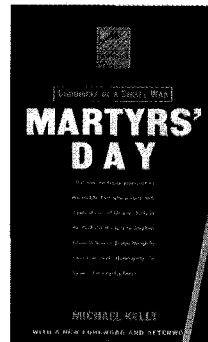
will be familiar with several of his sides—the principled pugilist, the brash comic, the family man. *Things Worth Fighting For* reflects all that and a great deal more. Mike was a superb portraitist; his full-length profiles of such figures as Edward Kennedy and Jesse Jackson deserve a permanent place in the annals of political writing. His war dispatches from Iraq and Kuwait in 1991 were immediately recognized as some of the finest war reporting of our time. And no history of the Clinton Administration will accurately capture the flavor of the era without extensive reference to the large volume of hot and pungent words directed by Mike Kelly at the forty-second President. Any collection of writings by someone whose life has been cut short elicits thoughts of wonderful things that will never be written, and such thoughts are especially

piercing in the case of Mike. But having his best work between hard covers establishes him as an enduring presence.

Mike Kelly was one of more than two dozen reporters, photographers, and media personnel killed since the start of the Iraq War. In per capita terms it was a far more lethal war for journalists than it was for combatants—“the worst death toll in the industry for more than

30 years,” Chris Cramer and John Owen write in the editors' note to *Dying to Tell the Story*, a tribute to members of the press claimed by the war. That book, published under the auspices of the International News Safety Institute, contains essay-memoirs written by colleagues of journalists who died in March, April, and May of 2003. *Dying to Tell the Story* can be ordered from www.newssafety.com; proceeds from sales of the book will go to programs to assist journalists.

Tribute of yet another kind will be paid this spring when the Atlantic Media Company bestows the first Michael Kelly Award. (Information about the award is available at www.kellyaward.com.) The competition is open to reporters and editors at U.S.-based newspapers and magazines; the winner will be selected by a panel of journalists. The award, which comes with a prize of \$25,000, will be given annually to the journalist whose work best exemplifies the essential quality that animated Mike Kelly's own career: “the fearless expression and pursuit of truth.” —THE EDITORS



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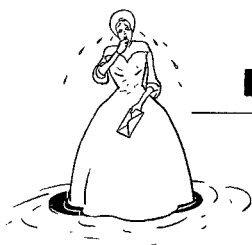
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blind Into Baghdad

As one of the Department of Defense officials involved in the initial planning for relief and reconstruction in Iraq, I would like to comment on James Fallows's article "Blind Into Baghdad" (January/February *Atlantic*). At every turn in his description of planning for Iraq, the author overemphasized bureaucratic conflict in the executive branch and distorted the nature of contingency planning.

As the Pentagon's "point man" (his term) for postwar plans, I worked continuously and harmoniously with my colleagues at State, USAID, the CIA, and the NSC. I also participated in numerous interagency meetings and conferences, including the January 2003 National Intelligence Council exercise that Fallows says Pentagon personnel were "forbidden by OSD to attend."

The author states that rather than holding a meeting with the Secretary of Defense or the deputy secretary, the nongovernmental organizations were given an audience only with me. In fact I had been meeting with the NGOs frequently on many topics since the start of operations in Afghanistan. I was not a consolation prize for the NGOs but a frequent interlocutor, and I remain so to this day. Our conversations are substantive and have often resulted in policy changes, even though we forgo the photo ops and the press releases that often encumber one-time meetings with the most senior officials.

Missing from Fallows's narrative was any mention of the official interagency planning effort that went on from early fall of 2002 to March of 2003. The planning group met weekly in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, next to the White House. Chaired by NSC and OMB officials, this group included senior representatives from State,

USAID, the CIA, Treasury, and many other agencies. Tom Warrick, the head of State's Future of Iraq Project, was a back-bencher at some of the sessions. The senior interagency planners were all familiar with the interesting work of his eclectic group.

The interagency group formulated first a strategy and then a detailed plan for relief and reconstruction. Representatives from the group coordinated these plans with international organizations and with General Tommy Franks, the combat commander. Secretaries Colin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld were briefed on the final plan, as was the President. The group even briefed the press on its work on February 24.

Although none of this planning was as juicy as the bureaucratic infighting that Fallows dwells on, it is an essential part of the story. Jay Garner—appointed in late January of 2003 to lead the field effort in Iraq—did face a daunting task, but not a blank sheet of paper. Indeed, the basic reconstruction plans discussed at the two-day conference that Garner held in February at the National Defense University were in the main developed—and harmoniously so—by the very interagency group that Fallows overlooked.

Finally, Fallows's judgment that when the past eighteen months are assessed "the Administration will be found wanting for its carelessness" does not pass muster. The four conflicts that I have helped to plan in the Pentagon suggest clearly that war, as Clausewitz told us, remains the province of chance. Military campaigns and their aftermath defy prediction. Intelligence accepted for a decade can be wrong. The same experts who incorrectly predict huge refugee flows may accurately predict civil disturbances. Staffs will fixate on things that do not come to pass and assume away the importance of things

that do. No plan—political or military—survives contact with reality. Planners will always make more mistakes than journalists who have the benefit of 20/20 hindsight.

We have not "squandered American prestige, fortune, and lives" in Iraq. Despite high costs and many casualties, the United States and its thirty-four coalition partners have destroyed one of the most heinous and dangerous regimes in the world, captured 80 percent of its criminal senior leadership, liberated the Iraqi people, and started the political and economic reconstruction of a nation that may well bring democracy to that part of the Middle East. Mr. Fallows should resist the temptation to call the game in the third inning.

Joseph J. Collins

*Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Alexandria, Va.*

James Fallows's lengthy list of expert warnings on Iraq that were ignored by the Bush Administration would have benefited from some reference to the strikingly parallel "splendid little war" that provided the other bookend to the twentieth century. (And both of those conflicts boasted a British troubadour, although Tony Blair's flack Alistair Campbell never quite matched the eloquence that Rudyard Kipling showed in his paean to American benevolence, "The White Man's Burden.") In the Philippines a century ago a walkover victory in the capital was followed by prolonged hostilities in the countryside. A foray by General Frederick Funston and his special forces into hostile territory led to the capture of the enemy leader, General Emilio Aguinaldo. (The two Napoleonic figures—both about five feet four—actually got along quite well after that episode.) Mark Twain suggested a redesign of Old Glory, with "the white stripes painted

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black and the stars replaced by the skull and crossbones," thereby inspiring legions of antigovernment demonstrators for generations to come. General Elwell Otis flaunted the "Mission Accomplished" sign in May of 1900, and President Theodore Roosevelt did it again on July 4, 1902; but General John J. Pershing was still fighting Muslim forces on Mindanao a decade later. More ominous in today's context, the Philippines action involved three fourths of the entire U.S. Army, and led to 4,200 American battle deaths (and several thousand more from wounds and tropical diseases)—not to mention the deaths of about 20,000 Filipino soldiers and as many as 200,000 Filipino civilians. And today this outpost of empire remains just as dysfunctional as it was under Spanish rule centuries ago.

*William Burke
San Francisco, Calif.*

As a whodunit probing the labyrinthine devolutions of the DOD, the CIA, the INC, NGOs, and USAID, "Blind Into Baghdad" was an entertaining read. American occupying forces should have done a better job preparing for and securing Iraq in the immediate aftermath of our unprecedented military victory, and have compounded this failure through various ensuing missteps. Most notable among these was the wholesale dissolution of the Baathist army rather than selective purging, which left the country without an effective indigenous security force while allowing the most belligerent remnants to escape with their weapons and conduct guerrilla operations against us.

These are points well taken. However, to extrapolate from them, as Fallows does, the assertion that they constitute failures of U.S. foreign policy on the order of the Bay of Pigs debacle and our escalation in Vietnam is fundamentally wrong. Do we actually need to point out that the examples Fallows cites were instances of military defeat for America, whereas Operation Iraqi Freedom was an astonishing military success? That it resulted in the deposition of a brutal, mass-murdering tyrant whose regime posed a persistent menace to civilized

world order and whose departure was earnestly wished for by the previous, Democratic Administration?

Would it be impolitic to suggest that the strength of American resolution and the Armageddon-like might of American military power in this instance has reverberated around the world to our immense benefit? That in the wake of this rout a chronic terrorist enemy of America—Muammar Qaddafi—did an about-face, abandoning his nuclear-weapons program and promising to behave himself as he pleaded for Americans to keep him on this earth a few years longer? That North Korea and Iran are suddenly much more cooperative in opening their nuclear programs up to international inspection? That the leader of the most dangerous Islamic state in the world, Pakistan, is now a committed ally of the United States in the war against al-Qaeda and international terrorism? And, finally, that America's newly revealed power and resolve has played a key role in helping to bring Pakistan and India together to work out a resolution over the powder keg that is Kashmir?

*Leonard Bakker
Berkeley, Calif.*

James Fallows's dissection of skewed Bush Administration intelligence analyses and flawed postwar planning was excellent. But why the gratuitous hammer blow to the UN Security Council, particularly France and Germany? As Fallows pointed out, no threat from Iraq justified the expenditure of billions and the loss of almost 500 American lives (and counting). The Security Council plan had worked well, and perhaps the finding that should have emerged from Fallows's otherwise marvelously insightful article was that France and Germany (and Canada and Mexico and others) were reluctant to jump on the bandwagon because they never did see any "evidence" justifying the Bush Administration's crusade. I realize Fallows did not undertake to assess that part of the Iraq story, but his sniping at the Security Council and those two members is surprising.

*Carl Schiermeyer
Long Beach, Calif.*

Your January/February cover photo is a great piece of photojournalism and a wonderful example of one picture's being worth a thousand words. Its composition (Rumsfeld in sharp focus in the foreground, Powell, President Bush, and Rice fuzzy in the background, and the messages in the subjects' faces (Rumsfeld scowling, Rice exasperated, Bush puzzled, and Powell trying to make sense of it all) perfectly complemented the theme of James Fallows's article. It's interesting that we don't see Rumsfeld's ear. If it had been there, we might also have seen Wolfowitz, Perle, and Feith whispering. Then again, not seeing them is part of the story, isn't it?

*C. Richard Wobbe
Lexington, Mass.*

I have taught U.S. history for thirty years, and I was startled by James Fallows's statement "Before the United States entered World War II, teams at the Army War College were studying what went right and wrong when American doughboys occupied Germany after World War I." This is the first time I've ever heard that U.S. troops—compared to troops from any foreign nation, for that matter—occupied Germany after World War I. At the time of the armistice German troops were still in France, and Germany had not even been invaded, let alone occupied. Nor was it occupied after the war, to my knowledge; if it had been, I imagine the British and the French would have been involved long before the Americans.

*John Calderwood
Oakland, Calif.*

James Fallows replies:

Obviously, I meant no personal slight to Joseph Collins or his importance. Neither did the people I quoted. He is right that the government did extensive interagency planning and that many of those dealing with it were harmonious and collegial. He is also right that the government carefully prepared for some postwar problems that did not occur—especially a flood of refugees out of Iraq. It is fair to point out the major reason Iraq avoided a refugee disaster: the United States assumed that the refugees would be fleeing Saddam Hussein's use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

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ons, and of course no such attack occurred.

But as I tried to explain in my article, it is not mere "20/20 hindsight" to point out that the Administration dismissed the central warnings of many expert advisory bodies. For instance, the uniformed leadership of the Army insisted that a larger force would be required to secure Iraq's territory than to topple its regime. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz ridiculed such claims in public, and Secretary Donald Rumsfeld overruled them within the Pentagon. But the Army was right. So were the scholars at the Army War College who said that it was better to go in with an impressively heavy force—to make opposition seem almost inconceivable—and then draw troops down quickly. Numerous other groups were unanimous in stressing the need to prevent disorder and looting after the fall of Baghdad, and to peel off the evil leadership of the Iraqi army but keep the main force intact. These and other issues I mentioned were fundamental to winning what the military called "Phase IV" of the war: operations after the fall of Baghdad. They were not secondary issues to be balanced against the refugee question in a "win some, lose some" fashion.

I think Mr. Collins misunderstands my point about the Administration's "carelessness." My complaint is not that it invaded Iraq—even though I personally was in the "What's the rush?" camp about the war. The removal of Saddam Hussein is obviously a blessing for nearly everyone in Iraq and the world. The complaint is that the Administration was sloppy and arrogant in a way that has cost both American and Iraqi lives.

Leonard Bakker may be operating under a similar misunderstanding. As a strictly military undertaking, the conquest of Iraq was masterly. As an example for the rest of the Middle East, it could conceivably have a beneficial effect. None of that affects the question I raised, which is why the aftermath was so needlessly bloody for Iraqis and Americans.

I agree with William Burke about the parallels with the Philippines (as I wrote for *The Atlantic* in "A Damaged Culture," November 1987), and with Richard Wobbe about the sublime cover photo. I don't understand why Carl Schiermeyer saw any slam at the Security Council. And I agree with John Calderwood that I should not have referred to an "occupation" of Germany after World War I.

Spies, Lies, and Weapons

Kenneth M. Pollack's article "Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong" (January/February *Atlantic*) makes the CIA's knowledge of Iraq seem little more than conventional wisdom. Equally depressing was Pollack's contention that the invasion was not a strategic mistake because the Persian Gulf will be more stable. The occupation suggests otherwise. Granted, Saddam Hussein was pure evil, and the United States no longer has to contend with him, but if evil was the criteria, with innocent deaths the metric, why not Rwanda or the Congo? If nuclear weapons were the criteria, why not North Korea, Iraq, or even Pakistan, whose fundamentalists seem only an assassination away from gaining control of a nuclear arsenal?

We hope to give the Iraqi people their freedom, but Iraqis are not free while their country is occupied, and their freedom after the occupation is unlikely. The alternative outcomes of civil war—an Islamic republic or another dictator—are more probable, which is what convinced the first President Bush to leave Saddam in place after the Gulf War.

The war wasn't a strategic mistake if one counts, as Pollack does, only the hoped-for benefits and ignores the cost. When one counts the American and Iraqi deaths; the billions spent for invasion, occupation, and reconstruction; our loss of allies and the hatred of America engendered by the invasion; the occupation's tying up half of our Army and reserves into the indefinite future, with the attendant morale problems; the energized terrorist recruitment; the chaos that lets terrorists now operate in Iraq; and the lost focus on destroying al-Qaeda—when all these are factored in, the war was a strategic mistake.

Gary Brown
Mammoth Lakes, Calif.

I agree with the main argument of Kenneth Pollack's article: that a combination of intelligence shortcomings and intelligence manipulation by Administration neocons led to a major misjudgment in the decision to invade Iraq. But I take issue with some of his assertions, especially the following:

What's more, we should not forget that containment *was* failing. The shameful performance of the United Nations Security Council members (particularly France and Germany) in 2002–2003 was final proof that containment would not have lasted much longer.

Pollack offers no support for this extreme assertion. On the contrary, at the time the Administration made the decision to invade, Iraq was enduring the most intrusive inspection regime ever, with unannounced visits and no off-limits places. This regime was authorized by the Security Council in December of 2002, with France and Germany voting in support. Subsequent developments undermine the charge that the inspectors were ineffective because they found nothing. At the time, the inspectors complained that the selective intelligence the United States was providing them was garbage, and it turns out they were probably correct in this.

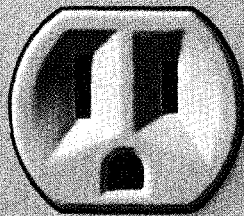
Pollack provides no support for his charge that France and Germany's conduct at the Security Council in 2002–2003 was shameful. Just because a nation vigorously disagrees with U.S. policy does not make that nation's conduct shameful. The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, showed great energy in traveling to line up uncommitted Security Council members to vote against the proposed U.S. resolution authorizing invasion. Further, France started with a lot more credibility with undecided nations than the United States had. Secretary Powell never once traveled beyond U.S. borders to garner support for the U.S. position. That Villepin outmaneuvered Powell does not make France's conduct shameful.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, facing a very tight re-election campaign, did publicly state that he would not commit German troops or German money for an Iraqi invasion. This was perhaps not the most diplomatic way to treat a close ally. But these were high stakes, and such conduct pales in comparison with America's bullying small countries to agree not to turn over U.S. combatants, should they be charged with war crimes, to an international criminal tribunal supported and funded by virtually all our old allies along with many other nations.

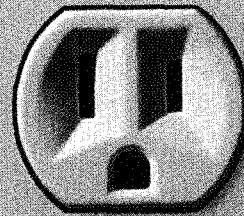
Edward Brown
Shaker Heights, Ohio



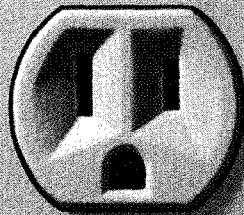
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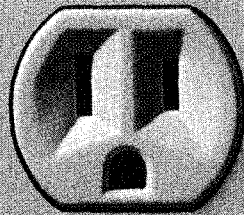
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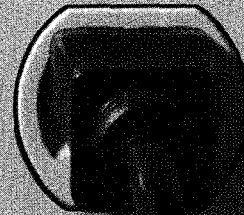
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Kenneth M. Pollack replies:

The question of going to war is an intensely personal one. Gary Brown is certainly entitled to his opinion, but we should recognize that there is no "objective" standard for when to go to war. There are those Americans who opposed U.S. participation in World War II, and those who believe that American intervention in Vietnam was a positive good.

Gary Brown makes any number of debatable assertions, and his contention that the Iraq War was not worth it because costs have been high and gains few is highly subjective and, at this point, probably premature. Another person could just as glibly assert that the sacrifices we made in blood and treasure were a small price to pay for freeing 25 million people from one of the most monstrous regimes of the past fifty years.

For my own part, I still do not believe that the war itself was a strategic mistake. As my article argued, what we have learned about our inaccurate intelligence greatly weakens what I previously believed was one of the strongest of those arguments. However, a case can still be made. Saddam Hussein was a force for tremendous instability in a vital and fragile part of the world. His active enmity toward the United States was a diplomatic, military, and economic drain (which, according to Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser in 1997, cost the United States some \$30–60 billion a year). Saddam's was a truly evil regime, the destruction of which benefited the Iraqi people (as they will readily tell you) and all of mankind. If we succeed in building a new, democratic Iraq, we will dramatically change the constellation of forces in the region. In addition, Saddam had not abandoned his WMD aspirations or programs entirely, and he was determined to acquire a nuclear weapon—which would have taken him much longer than the pre-war intelligence recognized.

I personally remain torn on the issue. I think it is a great benefit that Saddam's regime has been removed from the Middle East, and I am overjoyed that the Iraqis are rid of his sadistic rule. But I also recognize that the overstatement of Iraq's WMD threat does change the cost-benefit calculus.

Whether the war itself was justified or not, I believe the Administration's failure to build greater international support and to plan adequately for the war's aftermath was a strategic mistake. This mess was largely of our

own making and was not inherent in the case for war. As James Fallows's superb piece in the same issue explained, many of the problems we have encountered in Iraq since the fall of Baghdad were anticipated, and much good planning was done to address them; I know this all too well, because I participated in many of those planning exercises. It was the arrogance of the Pentagon officials charged with postwar reconstruction that brought us the problems we now face. The reconstruction of Iraq was never going to be easy—a point I made repeatedly in my book—but it never had to be this hard.

Gary Brown also challenges the human-rights motive. This, too, is an intensely personal issue—some people reckon that any injustice should be a cause for war, whereas others judge that war is never justified. Personally, I believe that although the United States cannot solve all the world's problems, some situations rise to a level that justifies, even demands, intervention. Iraq met my standards for intervention: Saddam Hussein may have been responsible for the deaths of as many as a million Iraqis (a crude metric, and hardly the only measure), and intervention did offer a solution to this problem. As for Rwanda, as a former member of the Clinton Administration, I wish that we had found a way to intervene there to stop the bloodshed. And as for the Congo, although I have no expertise in sub-Saharan Africa, I am eager to hear realistic suggestions for how the United States could stop that ongoing tragedy.

Both Gary Brown and Edward Brown raise the question of containment. The inspections undoubtedly succeeded to a much greater extent than even most of the inspectors themselves realized: by 1996 Saddam had been persuaded basically to suspend most of his WMD programs. However, the inspections had not eliminated all of Iraq's WMD programs, and Iraq remained quite active in the missile field. Moreover, inspections were never the major component of containment—sanctions were. Indeed, the desire to get the sanctions lifted seems to have been Saddam's principle motive in deciding to minimize his WMD holdings. And by 2002 the sanctions were on their last legs—thanks to the perfidy of our allies, led by the French, who refused to punish Iraq or any other country for violating them, and even joined in breaking them. The Bush Administration had attempted in

early 2001 to get the UN Security Council to adopt "smart sanctions" that would have refocused the embargo exclusively on military and dual-use items, while adding harsher penalties for breaking them—only to have the Security Council refuse.

While an American force of 250,000 was building up in the region, the Security Council suddenly rediscovered inspections as a way to block an American war. However, the United States could not keep that kind of pressure in place for very long; the inspectors did not find Iraq's minimized programs; and even then the UN did nothing to address the erosion of the sanctions. This was the ultimate problem in 2002: the runup to the war made clear that the Security Council was not willing to take any action that would have allowed containment to survive for the long term. The question was not whether the inspections were intrusive in 2003 but whether the UN was willing to take the steps necessary to keep intrusive inspections and effective sanctions in place for the many years, possibly decades, that would have made containment a reasonable, sustainable alternative. Because the Security Council refused to restructure containment to make it viable for the long run, it left open the choice that the Administration wanted: invade or do nothing. Of course, postwar revelations also suggest that doing nothing may not have been as bad an option as we once thought—because an Iraqi nuclear weapon was not even as imminent as the intelligence communities believed.

Elia Kazan

Mark Steyn's Post Mortem "The Crucible of Hollywood's Guilt" (December *Atlantic*) makes some good points, but Steyn did not touch on certain aspects that help explain the opposition to Elia Kazan. The Red hunt initiated by the Republican-controlled House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947 threatened the livelihood of about 30,000 workers in the film industry. HUAC charged that Hollywood supported the Communist ideology, but it never produced a list to support that allegation. The specter of political censorship stifled Hollywood's creative talent, and the quality of films made in Hollywood deteriorated as a consequence.



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Some good films were made—*On the Waterfront*, for instance—but not enough to hold audiences' interest. Exhibitors, complaining about Hollywood's bland output, turned to foreign-made films for their theaters, and the Hollywood film industry became the first major U.S. industry to lose a share of its domestic market to foreign competition during the post-World War II era. According to data from the 1960 *Film Daily Yearbook*, U.S.-produced films released in U.S. markets decreased from 378 in 1946 to 187 in 1959. In the same period imports increased from 90 to 252. As a sidebar to the Red hunt, the trend of showing imports guaranteed the demise of the production code that had governed film content for many years. Labor disputes and competition from television exacerbated the situation. Mass unemployment in the film industry followed. Second and third generations suffered along with their parents and grandparents.

Hollywood could use more filmmakers with Elia Kazan's talent, but unfortunately for Kazan, he is associated with the worst decade of Hollywood's history—the decade of political censorship and the blacklist. Political censorship remains a threat to filmmakers, as CBS's recent cancellation of the Ronald Reagan miniseries demonstrates.

Richard L. Olsen
Frazier Park, Calif.

Mark Steyn (and Elia Kazan before him) belabors a flawed analogy between the racketeers in *On the Waterfront* and entertainment figures who once gave their allegiance to Stalinism. The labor boss Johnny Friendly and his colleagues were directly involved in murder, extortion, and so forth. In contrast, the erstwhile Stalinists attacked by HUAC were generally marginal Communists—dilettantes who were not running the gulags or shooting the kulaks. It's one thing to fink on vicious gangsters or brutal apparatchiks. It is something else to cause trouble for some fatuous old friend who once marched by one's side for peace or signed a petition for Loyalist Spain.

Thomas Robbins
Rochester, Minn.

When he says that Elia Kazan "was on the right side of history," Mark Steyn reveals that he doesn't know his history. Kazan's naming names did nothing to fight communism. He named no names that the authorities didn't already have, so his information added nothing to the alleged battle against the Party. Nor did HUAC use any of this information in advising on legislation, which is what the committee was formed to do.

Steyn simplistically frames the issue as an either-or proposition: either you supported the Communists and refused to cooperate with the committee, or you were against communism and demonstrated your friendship to the committee by giving a roll call of old associates.

I favor a third and—I think—correct alternative: you could be against Communists and you could also be against the committee. Indeed, a large number of people were exactly that, and acquitted themselves with honor. The committee and the leadership of the Party mirrored each other. Both justified blacklisting, anti-Semitism, and physical and intellectual terrorism in the names of their "patriotic" causes. The committee hearings resembled nothing so much as the show trials in Stalin's Russia. Yes, Stalin's victims ended up dead, and the committee's ended up only unemployed—but are we to claim moral superiority because our evil was less virulent than theirs?

What was Kazan's contribution to history? He gave credibility to a cynical batch of politicians who were trying to raise their own profiles by humbling famous and (often) talented people. He lent legitimacy to the illegitimate (some of whom were subsequently disgraced and jailed for their own activities). I hardly call that being "on the right side of history."

Alas, by his actions Kazan also undermined his own moral credibility. He was a great director, and from what I have heard from mutual friends, he was loved for his many acts of kindness and generosity. (An actress friend recently told me that when her mother couldn't afford her maternity bills, Kazan reached into his own pocket.) It is thus all the sadder to think that, like Marley,

he carried into his death the heavy chains he forged in life.

Jeffrey Sweet
New York, N.Y.

Hitchens on Proust

In his comparison of the Scott Moncrieff/Kilmartin and Davis translations of Proust, Christopher Hitchens ("The Acutest Ear in Paris," January/February *Atlantic*) made clear some of the virtues and deficiencies of each, and in addition made me itch to read what I haven't of Proust and re-read what I have. Few reviews do so much, so well. If I may, I'd like to propose another way of handling the couplet "*Qui du cul d'un chien s'amourose, / Il lui paraît une rose.*" My version is "Who loves a dog's ass can expect his nose / To say it smells just like a rose."

Stuart Jay Silverman
Hot Springs, Ark.

Christopher Hitchens writes that Monty Python's attempt to reduce *Swann's Way* to a madrigal was yanked offstage as soon as the singing started. Serves them right for choosing the wrong genre. Had they but fielded a barbershop quartet, the condensed strains of "Madeline, Sweet Madeline ..." might have made the canon.

Russell Seitz
Nantucket, Mass.

Christopher Hitchens's fine-tuned analysis of Proust translations deserves to be rewarded with the following information about whether the French have a precise equivalent for "killing time." It is *tuer le temps*, and is the subject of an archly ironic prose poem by Baudelaire, "Le Galant Tireur." Its irony has been definitively analyzed by Barbara Johnson, in her book *Défigurations du langage poétique* (1980), which Hitchens will have to read in French.

Andrew J. McJenna
Chicago, Ill.

When he cites the first sentence of *Swann's Way*, Christopher Hitchens refers to the tense as the "*passé composé*," or past perfect. I believe that in French the *passé composé* is equivalent to

the present perfect tense in English, not the past perfect (*plus-que-parfait* in French). The past perfect in English uses the helping verb “had” and usually refers to an action that took place before another action in the past.

Laurie Pesez
Kerrville, Texas

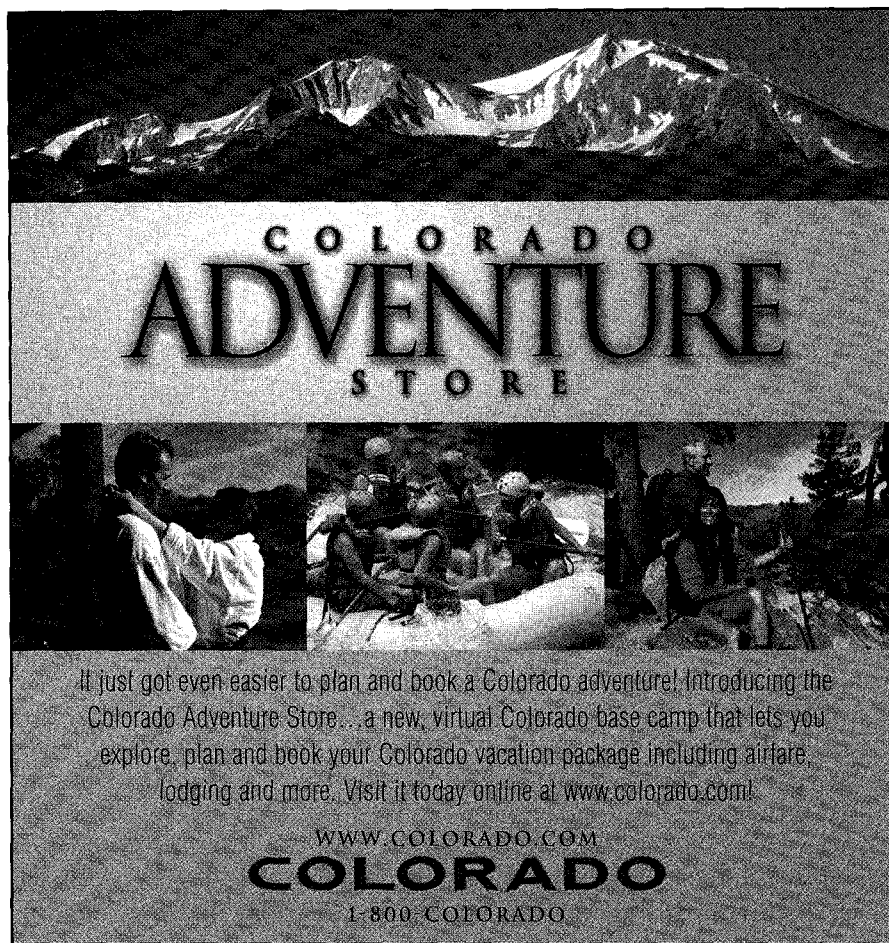
Don Quixote

I take issue with a statement made by Terry Castle in her review of Edith Grossman’s new translation of *Don Quixote* (“High Plains Drifter,” January/February *Atlantic*). After informing her readers that she has read the novel twice in her life, first Samuel Putnam’s translation and more recently Grossman’s, Castle tells us that Grossman “has produced the most agreeable *Don Quixote* ever.” Her boldness is remarkable. Having read all of two versions of the book (and nearly thirty-five years apart at that), how does Castle know that this new edition is the best translation out there? By her own admission, she can’t possibly.

Dani Schwartz
Baltimore, Md.

Terry Castle replies:

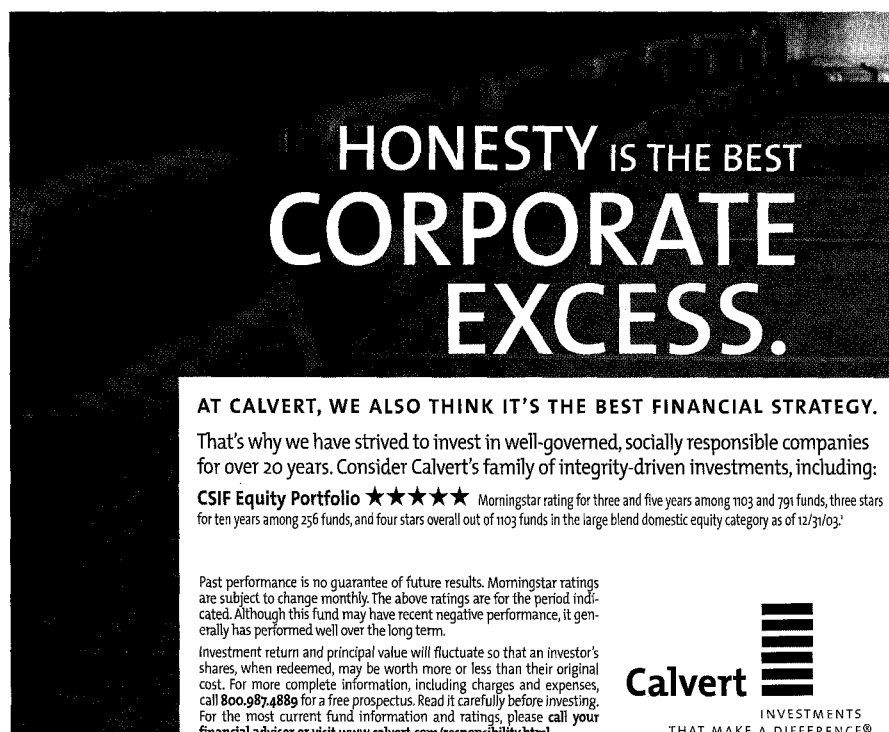
Dani Schwartz catches me out indeed in a Sancho-like gaffe. But reading “around,” as it were, in *Don Quixote* over the past thirty years (and intensively over the past month) has also meant reading around, necessarily, in multiple translations—from the classic versions of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries (Thomas Shelton, Charles Jervas, John Ormsby) to a raft of others published in the past five or six decades. If one has any sensitivity to style at all, one can get a workable sense of a translator’s idiom, I’d argue, by looking at certain “potted” narrative moments: the famous opening sequence, for example, or the episode of the windmills, or the heart-breaking sequence in which Quixote is returned to his village in a cage at the end of Part 1. How naturally and well a translator renders dialogue is also key; the book lives on, as I suggested, in its characters’ exquisite, disarming conversations. Even in the light of other outstanding modern versions (Putnam, Walter Starkie, J. M. Cohen, John Rutherford), it’s hard for me to



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imagine a suppler and more readable English text than Grossman's; indeed, I could not find one.

Do As I Say

I squirmed and laughed and nodded my way through Caitlin Flanagan's column "Do As I Say" (January/February *Atlantic*). As with her past commentaries on sex and the married girl and America's obsession with the plastic storage tub, she manages to be right and right on without being self-righteous or right-wing. I suspect that she's not looking for another job, but as far as I'm concerned, she *is* the hip and glamorous spokesperson for those of us who are struggling to do the right thing for ourselves and our kids.

Jennifer Costa
Cambridge, Mass.

Regarding Caitlin Flanagan's piece on Laura Schlessinger: When people such as William Bennett and Dr. Schlessinger take it upon themselves to hector the rest of flawed humanity for not holding to a perfect code of behavior, of course they open themselves up to heavy criticism. Most public figures who harangue us about the perils of our declining moral fiber have this exact problem. Why should adults who were no more chaste than you or I prior to marriage endlessly harp on the virtues of abstinence? The problem is that the "declining moral fiber" they lament doesn't exist. Disagreeable behaviors (premarital sex, adultery, marital misery with or without subsequent divorce) have been with us forever and perhaps always will be. Children find out, one way or another, that their parents are human. Schlessinger's shtick is the same "Do as I say, not as I do" baloney that puts our adolescents off whatever sincere moral guidance we might be able to offer them.

When I think about the general conditions under which most of the world's children live, I can't say that I get all that overwrought about the nine-year-old middle-class American child who must start dealing with two households and a "blended family." Life and relationships are messy and complicated, and no

amount of moralizing and prescribing simple solutions will change that. I do believe that parents should try to put children's needs first in the unhappy marriage or the divorcing family, but even the most stoic parents, resigning themselves to some kind of unfulfilling arrangement on behalf of their offspring, will exact a price. People just aren't that good at "sucking up" the daily grinding misery of an unhappy primary relationship—unless they are saints, and most of us are not.

The whole laughable issue of "wifely duty," the latest profit-producing bandwagon on which Dr. Laura has jumped, lowers the interaction of spouses to a form of prostitution or patronization. If my spouse cannot handle the fact that I am tired or anxious, or cannot bear to sleep with him because he has been sniping at me all week for my flaws, so I don't feel terribly sexy, then we don't have a relationship of equal partners or adult companions. That is the reality—the day-to-day complexities of a marriage can often not be fully appreciated through the lens of simplistic prescriptions.

Nancy J. Melucci
Huntington Beach, Calif.

Caitlin Flanagan replies:

Nancy Melucci has a hard time feeling sympathy for children of divorce. I don't. To sit a child down and tell him that Daddy is moving out is to destroy the thing that matters most in the world to him: his home. When parents divorce, they inflict deep pain on their children. It's legal to do it; it's sometimes necessary to do it; but let's not lie about it: it breaks children's hearts.

Since writing my review of Laura Schlessinger's new book, I have had countless people tell me that they can't stand her because she's "mean." But Laura says you'll hurt a child if you divorce; don't do it. Nancy says she can't work up much compassion for a nine-year-old from a broken home. So who's mean?

Advice & Consent

The question asked by "Would Shakespeare Get Into Swarthmore?" (by John Katzman, Andy Lutz, and Erik Olson, March *Atlantic*) is not relevant

in the context of evaluating the writing section of the new SAT. Evaluating the new SAT is not a bad thing to do, but I believe that the authors of this piece ignored a prose author's first duty to an audience: assuring readers that the writer has the facts straight.

Why would anyone be surprised that a blank-verse passage from *As You Like It* doesn't have the characteristics of a good persuasive essay? Surely the authors don't believe that the purpose of an expository writing test for high school students is to uncover a twenty-first-century Shakespeare.

We know that one must learn basic rules, structure, and techniques of a domain before departing from them, before finding innovative ways to break away, before creating new forms for expressing ideas, arguments, and discoveries.

We are adding a writing section to the SAT because we care deeply about helping to improve the writing skills of all young people in our nation. Writing allows students to contextualize their knowledge and is central to self-expression, professional growth, and civic participation. Yet according to national research, about one twelfth-grade student in five produces completely satisfactory prose; about 50 percent meet "basic" requirements; and only one in five can be called "proficient."

Gaston Caperton
President, The College Board
New York, N.Y.

Bruce Hoffman's graphic article "Aftermath" (January/February *Atlantic*), about cleaning up after suicide bombings in Jerusalem, should give pause to anyone considering the possibility of a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, not to mention Arab nations still at war with the Jewish state. With Jerusalem's having had a majority of Jews ever since the censuses of the mid nineteenth century, Arab terrorists might have conceded that Jerusalem is an integral part of Israel and not a target for terrorist suicide bombers.

Obviously they have not—for Jerusalem or for Tel Aviv, Haifa, and other cities within Israel. The brutality of these suicide bombings precludes the possi-

bility of negotiations with the perpetrators. Until Palestinian organizations accept the continuing existence of a terror-free state of Israel, neither a Palestinian state nor economic well-being will be possible for Arabs living west of the Jordan River, whether in Judea, Samaria, or Gaza.

Nelson Marans
Silver Spring, Md.

Ben Birnbaum's "A Family Deposition" (January/February *Atlantic*), regarding the lawsuit of an Egyptian jurist against the Jewish people for alleged thefts during the Exodus, reminded me that I have been discussing the very same issue with my attorneys. We are considering litigation against Egypt for the enslavement of the Jewish people for several hundred years prior to the Exodus. We will probably seek damages in excess of two trillion dollars.

Milton B. Lederman
Rochester, N.Y.

Fans of Puccini's *Tosca* will quickly recognize William Matthews's "*E lucevan le stelle*" (published posthumously in the January/February *Atlantic*) as almost certainly a poetic-licensed translation of Cavaradossi's famous tenor aria from Act III of the opera.

Matthews's poignant lines and those penned by Puccini's librettists, Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, flow as kindred, though not perfectly confluent, streams. Cavaradossi, certain that he will face a firing squad within the hour, begins a farewell letter to his beloved Tosca. But this is death row at the opera, so the condemned artist soon lifts his pen, and then his voice:

*E lucevan le stelle ...
ed olezzava la terra ...
stridea l'uscio dell'orto ...
e un passo sfiorava la rena ...
Entrava ella, fragrante,
mi cadea fra le braccia ...*

In the English translation of the libretto that accompanies the celebrated Callas-Di Stefano-Cobbi recording of *Tosca*, these opening lines of the aria become

And the stars shone
And the earth was perfumed
The gate to the garden creaked
And a footstep rustled the sand
to the path...
Fragrant, she entered
And fell into my arms...

Matthews's poem begins

And the stars shone, and the
earth unstoppered
its perfumes, the garden gate
scrimched
open, footsteps lisped along the path
and they were hers, and she was mine.

Cavaradossi's tearful farewell (and the aria) concludes with "*E muoio disperato! E non ho amato mai tanto la vita!*"—"And desperately I die! And never before have I loved so much!"

Unlike Illica and Giacosa, Matthews gives his *lucevan* a final star turn:

and, like any star, I have nothing
to burn but the life I love.

The Atlantic cites as the source of the poem the just published volume *Search Party: Collected Poems by William Matthews*, edited by Sebastian Matthews and Stanley Plumly. Indeed, "*E lucevan le stelle*" is found on page 262, in the section labeled "Uncollected Poems (1982-1997)." There are no further citations or commentary in *Search Party* about the poem, other than acknowledgments in the front matter that the work has not previously appeared in book form and that *The Atlantic* is the "journal" where the work was first published.

William Matthews's penchant for translation is evident from his earlier works, including *Selected Poems & Translations, 1969-1991*. The editors of *Search Party* and *The Atlantic* are both to be applauded for bringing "*E lucevan le stelle*" to light. However, readers should know that Matthews surely found inspiration from Puccini's librettists, just as Cavaradossi was stirred to passionate desperation by the memory of Tosca's kiss. (And of course we're talking here about "*Oh, dolci baci*"—not the rather more hard-edged "kiss" that Tosca, dagger in hand, lays on Baron Scarpia back in Act II.)

Joseph Lipscomb
Chevy Chase, Md.

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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, a born-again political strategist; Keystone Kops, Iraqi style; Jack Paar in memoriam

JOSHUA GREEN

As a political consultant to Bush, Ralph Reed must "never outshine his client." But his "double-breasted navy suit, impeccably knotted silk tie, and matching gold cufflinks and wristwatch" are "more Donald Trump than Organization Man."

PAGE 32

TISH DURKIN

"According to one American MP, immediately after the war officers at one Baghdad police station were stealing cars so as to have something to patrol in."

PAGE 36

CHRISTOPHER SHEA

"Ten Tax Scofflaws": A list

PAGE 38

MARK STEYN

"Paar's talkers drew as big an audience as Letterman and Leno and their tight list of inarticulate screen celebrities combined, and his was the classic water-cooler show."

PAGE 40

PRIMARY SOURCES

In the two years following the World Trade Center attacks, "only sixteen people were sentenced to five years or more in prison for terrorism—fewer than during the two years preceding 9/11."

PAGE 42

THE NATION IN NUMBERS

Successful members of George W. Bush's fundraising network are encouraged to "identify and mentor" others. "(One Republican fundraiser described this as an 'Amway system' for the rich.)"

PAGE 46

CLEARER THAN THE TRUTH

Duplicity in foreign affairs has sometimes served the national interest. But the case of Iraq is different

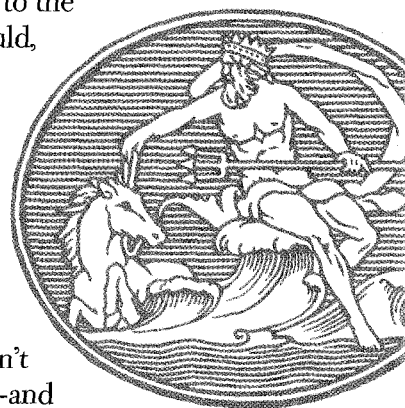
BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

The Bush Administration "systematically misrepresented the threat from Iraq's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs and ballistic missile programs," concluded a January report issued by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace—a nonpartisan research institution, albeit one far more closely aligned with the Democratic Party than with the Republican. Not all fair-minded observers would go quite that far. But in the most generous interpretation possible, it is clear that the President and his team massaged the truth—even if we allow for significant intelligence failures generally, as well as for the great uncertainty in the months preceding the war regarding the status of Iraq's biological-weapons program specifically. That is, the Administration consistently selected evidence and suppositions that supported the policies it advocated, and just as consistently ignored or dismissed evidence and arguments to the contrary. Defenders of the Administration should, but won't, acknowledge that even before the war few of the best-informed experts at home or abroad saw the Iraqi threat from unconventional weapons in nearly as dire terms as did Bush and his advisers, and that virtually no responsible experts saw the ties between Iraq and Islamist terrorism that the Administration discerned.

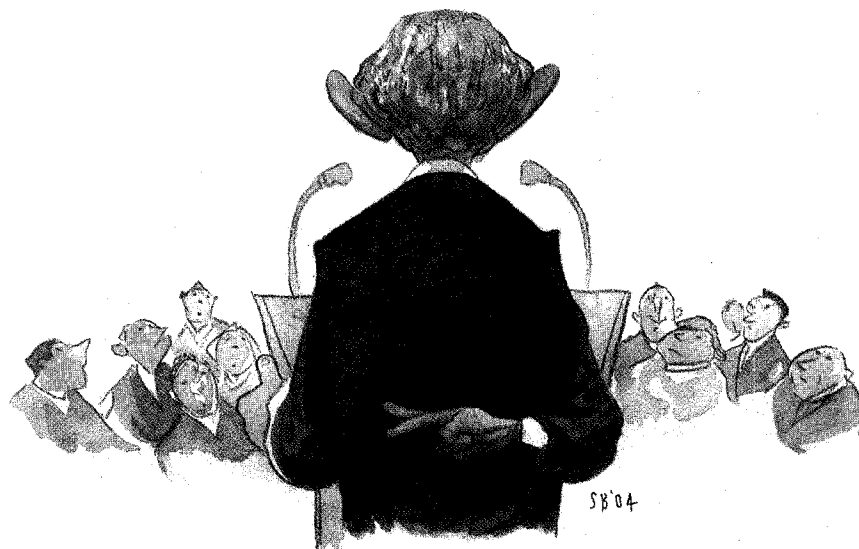
Does this mean that the Administration didn't go to war in defense of what it believed were—and perhaps are—the vital security interests of the United States? No; it merely suggests that the reasons given publicly for war were not the only—or even the most important—ones. That Saddam's WMD programs posed an immediate danger now seems highly doubtful. But whether an inspections regime, "smart sanctions," and the vigilance of the international community (and of successor American administrations) could have guaranteed that Iraq wouldn't acquire those capabilities in the future is another issue entirely, and one that undoubtedly haunted Bush and his advisers. And that matter is quite separate from whatever strategic and political advantages—desirable or essential—the Administration believed a not hostile Iraq would give the United States.

So, regardless of the obfuscations that accompanied the case for



war, the wisdom or folly of the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq can still be argued. This decision rested on the assumption (shared by the Administration's Democratic critics) that a "rogue state" like Saddam's Iraq cannot be deterred from using weapons of mass destruction, and that therefore,

Senator Arthur Vandenberg's advice to Dean Acheson (the Clinton Administration's favorite Secretary of State) to "scare hell out of the American people" by, in Acheson's words, painting a picture "clearer than the truth" regarding the Soviet menace in order to win public support for enormous defense



as President Clinton declared in 1998, the United States "simply cannot allow" Iraq to acquire such weapons.

But instead of debating that complex proposition, which has guided U.S. national-security policy across administrations, Democratic critics profess shock that the Bush Administration exaggerated and distorted the truth in justifying war. Although John Kerry and Wesley Clark charge that the President and his officials "misled" Congress and the public, these men should know that virtually all administrations—including those most revered by Democrats—have, to quote General Clark's criticism of the Bush Administration, "hyped" and "stretched" the truth when pushing the country to pursue national-security policies that they deemed crucial. FDR, though he claimed to embrace the neutrality that a great majority of Americans favored, in fact surreptitiously sought—long before Pearl Harbor—to maneuver the United States into war. And the Truman Administration followed

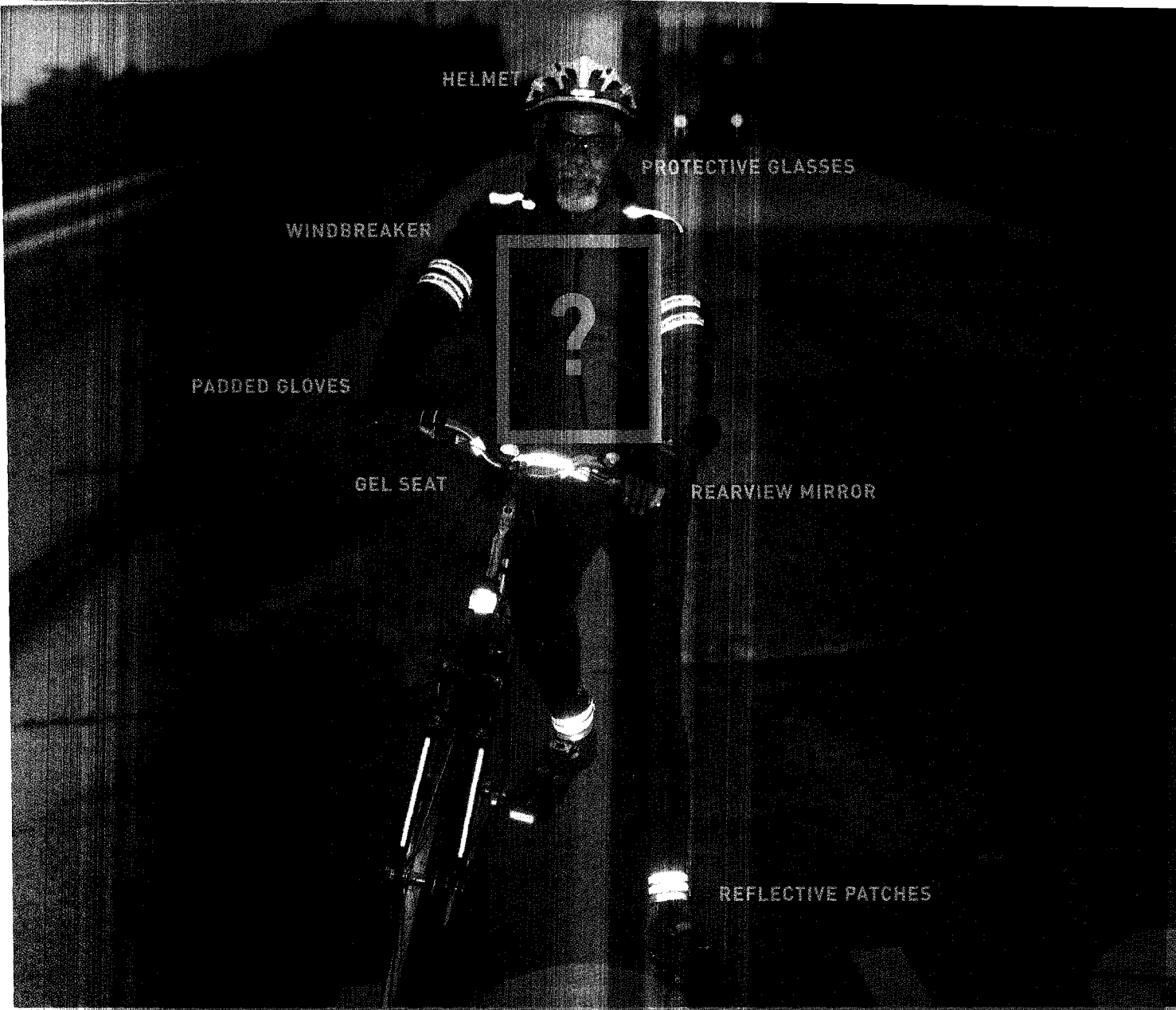
increases and for the new and sweeping global role it perceived to be in America's interest.

The Clinton Administration's hyping and stretching of the truth in pushing for and justifying war in Kosovo—the first war the U.S.-led NATO ever waged, and one fought against a country that, however repellent, posed no threat to any member of the alliance, least of all the United States—is more recent and therefore somewhat more relevant. The Clinton Administration made war on Yugoslavia for complex reasons, including its conviction that such action was necessary to bolster America's leadership position in post-Cold War Europe (a position the Administration held to be an essential U.S. interest). However, before, during, and after the conflict, it justified the war by averring that its intention, to quote President Clinton, was to stop "deliberate, systematic efforts at ... genocide." Although Yugoslavia's counterinsurgency campaign in Kosovo was indisputably brutal, the Administra-

tion clearly exaggerated, and its rationalizations for war were clearly selective. It is largely agreed that before U.S. intervention about 1,800 civilians, mostly Kosovar Albanians but also Serbs, were killed in fighting and in Yugoslavia's ferocious efforts to uproot the Kosovo Liberation Army—efforts that included murder, but efforts that the KLA itself deliberately provoked. During the war the Administration based its claims that Yugoslavia was engaged in genocide on what it knew to be a highly dubious evidentiary foundation—unconfirmed reports passed on to NATO by the KLA, an obviously biased party and one that the State Department had called a terrorist organization. In the only in-depth investigation of the issue by a U.S. newspaper, the late Daniel Pearl and Robert Block, of *The Wall Street Journal*, concluded that the Yugoslavian campaign in Kosovo, to quote the headline of their piece, was "cruel, bitter, savage," but, contrary to the Clinton Administration's claims, "genocide it wasn't."

Of course, there's every reason to assume that the Clinton Administration evaded, distorted, and exaggerated for the most honorable reasons—that is, in pursuit of what it saw as America's vital foreign-policy interests. And, of course, there's every reason to assume the same of the Bush Administration. Why have American Presidents so commonly misrepresented and stretched the truth in matters of national security? The answer lies largely in this country's enviable geopolitical position and military strength. Given that America is separated by vast oceans both from its potential adversaries and from areas of potential geopolitical instability, national threats have nearly always been more a matter of supposition, and of future consequences, than of present reality. In 1966, while discussing how losing South Vietnam might diminish American credibility and threaten the country's security, one of Robert McNamara's closest aides, Assistant

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WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED

Some people should not take ZOCOR. Discuss this with your doctor.

ZOCOR should not be used by patients who are allergic to any of its ingredients. In addition to the active ingredient simvastatin, each tablet contains the following inactive ingredients: cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, iron oxides, talc, titanium dioxide, and starch. Butylated hydroxyanisole is added as a preservative.

Patients with liver problems: ZOCOR should not be used by patients with active liver disease or repeated blood test results indicating possible liver problems. (See WARNINGS.)

Women who are or may become pregnant: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus. **Women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely that they will become pregnant.** If a woman does become pregnant while on ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once.

Women who are breast-feeding should not take ZOCOR.

WARNINGS

Muscle: Tell your doctor right away if you experience any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness at any time during treatment with ZOCOR so your doctor can decide if ZOCOR should be stopped. Some patients may have muscle pain or weakness while taking ZOCOR. Rarely, this can include muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage. The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients taking certain other drugs along with ZOCOR:

- Cyclosporine, itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, HIV protease inhibitors, the antidepressant nefazodone, or large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily), particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Gemfibrozil particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Other lipid lowering drugs (other fibrates or ≥ 1 g/day of niacin) that can cause myopathy when given alone.
- Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

The dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily in patients receiving gemfibrozil. The combined use of ZOCOR and gemfibrozil should be avoided, unless your doctor determines that the benefits outweigh the increased risks of muscle problems. Caution should be used when using ZOCOR with other fibrates or niacin because these can cause muscle problems when taken alone.

No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine.

The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of some liver enzymes. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and thereafter when clinically indicated. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months and periodically thereafter (eg, semiannually) for the first year of treatment. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors

who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR[®] (simvastatin). ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by gemfibrozil and to a lesser extent other fibrates and niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥ 1 g/day).

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations or of damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 10 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range. Of the 7 cases of myopathy/rhabdomyolysis among 10,269 patients on ZOCOR in another study, 4 were aged 65 or more (at baseline), 1 of whom was over 75.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In 2 large, 5-year studies, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychic disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems) or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.



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Secretary of Defense John McNaughton, allowed that “it takes some sophistication to see how Vietnam automatically involves our [vital interests].” The assumption that the public won’t understand—or won’t buy—the often esoteric logic behind American national-security policy has long made it tempting for both Democratic and Republican administrations to make their arguments “clearer than the truth.” In the case of the current Administration, it was far easier to warn of an immediate threat than it was to defend the complicated and debatable proposition that now was the best time to forestall a potential threat.

If there’s nothing original, historically speaking, in the Bush Administration’s distortions and exaggerations, are those actions nevertheless particularly insidious?

The Administration conflated the dangers posed by terrorists with those posed by tyrants, and said that the same sort of pre-emptive measures must be applied to both.

The answer is yes—and largely because of factors that this Administration has perceptively grasped and forthrightly articulated. The President has made a persuasive case that the September 11 attacks represent a threat to the United States that is of unprecedented immediacy and magnitude. For the first time in its history the country confronts enemies that seek not geopolitical advantage but our national annihilation—and they must be destroyed, because they cannot be deterred. The Administration has correctly asserted that the war against al-Qaeda and its ilk cannot be won on the defensive, and—partisan and simplified objections to “pre-emptive war” aside—the United States must act to thwart latent threats before they develop fully. Furthermore, this war can be waged and won only by using the most sensitive intelligence, which perforce means that much of the contest will be covert; and even when military action is overt, the full dimen-

sions of and reasons for that action must often remain unrevealed. Therefore, the public must place enormous trust in its government.

In justifying war against Iraq, the Administration suggested ties between a mortal adversary (al-Qaeda) and what was at worst a worrisome future adversary (Saddam)—ties whose existence nearly every knowledgeable observer has called into question. Furthermore, the Administration conflated the dangers posed by terrorists with those posed by tyrants, and said that the same sort of pre-emptive measures must be applied to both. This is a dubious argument, and one that must be rigorously examined rather than continually asserted. (It is ludicrous to suggest, as President Bush has, that a Saddam-

ruled Iraq armed with chemical weapons—weapons that it possessed in 1991, but was deterred from using against the U.S. in the Persian Gulf War—poses the same kind of threat and requires the same kind of response as, say, an al-Qaeda-ruled and nuclear-armed Pakistan.)

Here’s the rub: Congress and the public will most likely have to grant to this and future administrations vast and unprecedented latitude to take pre-emptive paramilitary and military measures—measures that may even appear to be in violation of international law. The public may well have to accept a large degree of ignorance regarding such actions and the reasons behind them. This Administration has not misled or distorted more than have most previous ones. But it is operating in a new world, and it has squandered the trust that we are called upon to give it. ■

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.

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SECOND COMING

Ralph Reed, now born again as a political strategist, has moved on from doing God's work to doing George W. Bush's

Few figures in American politics seem more fixed in time and place than Ralph Reed. As the brash, boyish director of the Christian Coalition a decade ago, Reed personified the ascendant religious right: he was an articulate, media-savvy spokesman who put to rest the predominant stereotype of religious conservatives as fiery televangelists, and led them into the modern political era. An organizational genius, Reed transformed the remnants of Pat Robertson's failed 1988 presidential campaign into a potent political force, more than a million strong at its peak. The Christian Coalition was instrumental in shaping the Republican Party of the 1990s, and helped Newt Gingrich bring off the Republican revolution of 1994. For a time Reed appeared likely to be the power behind the curtain for years to come. In 1995 *Time* seemed only mildly hyperbolic when it extolled him on the cover as "the right hand of God."

The following year, however, the Republican Party of Gingrich and Reed seemed to expire after Bob Dole's defeat by Bill Clinton. Reed's aggressive style of conservatism alienated moderate voters. He left the Christian Coalition in 1997, just as its influence began to wane, and largely disappeared from the public eye.

But he did not abandon politics. Reed returned to Georgia, where he had been raised, and began anew as a secular political consultant. The return home could not have provided much professional solace: the governor's mansion was in the hands of a popular Democrat, and by 2000 both the state's Senate seats, too, were held by Democrats. The consulting firm that Reed founded, Century Strategies, had an inauspicious start when most of its clients, including Alabama Governor Fob James, lost their 1998 races. Nevertheless, over the next four years Reed helped do for the Georgia Republican Party something much like what he'd done for the Coalition—organizing and rebuilding it from the ground up. He

was elected state party chairman in 2001, and in 2002 the Georgia Republicans won a historic upset. Sonny Perdue became the first Republican in thirty-nine gubernatorial elections to win, and a Republican congressman, Saxby Chambliss, defeated the Democratic senator Max Cleland. Georgia's other senator, Zell Miller, is a Democrat in name only, who has already endorsed George W. Bush—so in practical terms Georgia was fully Republican. "What happened in Georgia in 2002 was a once-in-a-decade performance," says the political analyst Charlie Cook.

Even if it had many causes (not least the tremendous appeal of the President, whose visits in behalf of Republican candidates Reed leveraged to maximum effect), this startling success testified to Reed's enduring skill as a political strategist. The Georgia resurgence went a long way toward detoxifying his image, proving that he could succeed outside the context of a politics whose very nature was implicitly rejected by his party's embrace of "compassionate" conservatism. The Bush Administration has acknowledged Reed's achievement by putting him in charge of the Southeast for the upcoming re-election campaign—recognition that confers high standing in the current Republican hierarchy. Beneath that very practical tribute lies a greater honor, and a challenge. Because most southeastern states are reliably Republican, Reed's true responsibility is to reprise his Georgia performance in the state that analysts of both parties believe could once again determine the next President: Florida.

For all his star wattage as a media figure, Reed's political success with the Christian Coalition stemmed from his ability to master the drudgery of grassroots organizing. Reed ran leadership schools and activist training seminars, and his early understanding of such tactics as barraging politicians with e-mails, faxes, and phone calls made the

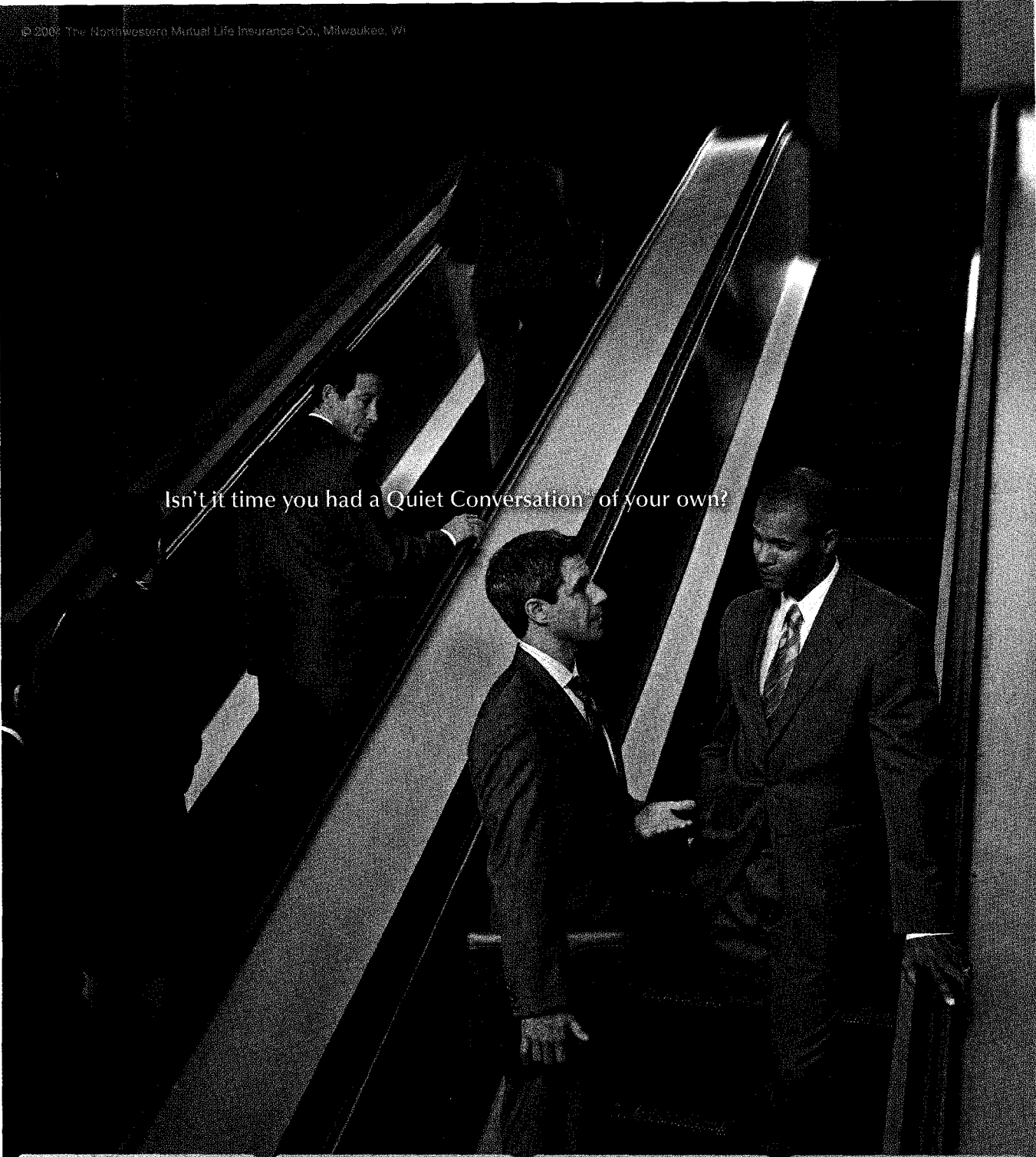
Christian Coalition—with its 2,000 chapters nationwide ready to coalesce and strike quickly almost anywhere in the country—the feared and respected outfit that it was. Reed once bragged, "We're the McDonald's of American politics."

He applied the same missionary zeal to organizing the party in Georgia before the 2002 elections, assembling 3,000 volunteers and 500 paid workers who significantly lifted Republican turnout. "Organization has been my background since I started with the College Republicans, twenty-five years ago," Reed told me when I visited him recently in his office at Century Strategies, in suburban Atlanta. "When I took my kids trick-or-treating the Thursday before that election, I brought some door hangers that had our slate of candidates and a picture of the President with Sonny Perdue and Saxby Chambliss that said, 'The Bush Team. Vote Tuesday.' Every house my kids went to to get candy, I either handed it to the person or hung it on the door handle. Now, you might say, 'Big deal. You hung forty door hangers.' But what if three thousand people hung forty door hangers? Do the math."

He continued, "I went up to Ray Buchanan, the defensive back for the Atlanta Falcons, who lives down the street from me. He and my wife are friends. We were going down the street with our kids, and Ray happened to be out in the driveway, and I went up to him and handed him a flyer and said, 'I want you to vote for Saxby and Sonny on Tuesday.' And he said, 'I will. I'll vote for them.'" Reed stressed that voter contact like this on a broad scale is the key to winning Florida, and that organizing the state, and registering 75,000 new voters, is the first order of business on his regular trips there. (He was practiced enough to laugh when I asked if he would organize the Miami Dolphins.)

Reed, now forty-two years old, still speaks in perfectly crafted sound bites and slightly louder than one expects in private conversation, as if a bank of television cameras were still trained on him

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(his sharp laugh is even louder). His position as a political consultant to Bush is a subordinate one, however, and demands that he never outshine his client. Here Reed struggles a bit. His double-breasted navy suit, impeccably knotted silk tie, and matching gold cufflinks and wristwatch are more Donald Trump than Organization Man. And the breathtaking oratorical skills he so often displayed on behalf of religious conservatism are in stark contrast to those of the man he now works for.

Reed told me that he assumes Florida will be as closely contested this time around as last. When I asked how he would persuade swing voters, he delivered the most eloquent rationale I've heard for going Bush's way: "A Bush Republican is someone who is conservative but also compassionate, someone who is principled but also builds bridges and reaches out, somebody who remains true to the core values of our party but also gains credibility that in historic terms has never been achieved by Republicans on issues like health care, education, and immigration, enabling us to reach out to young people, and seniors, and women, and Hispanics." As

Reed explained how his organization would spread the good news, one could hear familiar echoes: "Under his guidance and leadership we are strengthening the economy, winning the war on terror, and strengthening the institutions of family and marriage." He was speaking of the President, but it was easy to imagine that he was referring to Him.

Even if Reed downplays his past with the Christian Coalition as he determinedly tries to emphasize the need to re-elect Bush, his ties to evangelicals are an important factor in the campaign. Karl Rove has stated his belief that as many as four million evangelicals

who might have supported Bush in 2000 did not vote. Reed has a shrewd understanding of how to rally them. When Bush lost to John McCain in that year's New Hampshire primary, and appeared in danger of losing the nomination, Reed's firm swamped evangelicals in South Carolina with 400,000 phone calls and mailings critical of McCain, which were crucial to Bush's decisive win there. "The Christian Coalition was more an electoral machine than a lobby," Nina J. Easton writes in *Gang of Five*, a collective biography of Reed and four other conservatives, "and as such it could claim spectacular success, especially in turning out voters in close races." Reed's track record of exploiting cultural divides, as well as of turning out voters, would be a boon in any southern state—but particularly in Florida, which in 2000 was decided by 537 votes.

If Reed delivers Florida and Bush wins re-election, it will be a huge step forward in Reed's career as a secular political operative, establishing—or, rather, re-establishing—him at the national level. He will have arrived for the second time, and by quite a different path, at a

level that many never reach once. Reed may not again become cover-of-*Time* famous, but he will at last be poised to play a significant role in the Republican-controlled Washington that he has worked all his adult life to bring about.

What that role may be is a subject of considerable speculation. It was once believed that Reed returned to Georgia with the goal of running for the Senate. But with Saxby Chambliss newly elected, and the likelihood that Zell Miller, who is retiring this year, will be replaced by a Republican, Reed has so thoroughly succeeded in transforming the state into a Republican stronghold that there is no obvious office left for him to pursue. Further talk had Reed coveting the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee—the party's top political-operative slot. In keeping with his studied deflecting of attention from himself to his cause, Reed made great drama of not addressing his future when I pressed the topic.

He insists that he does not view his success as a political consultant as a return to power, and he claims, not implausibly, to find a thread of consistency in his successive careers. "I left the Christian Coalition," he told me, "because I wanted to help elect a Republican President and was legally prevented from doing so directly" because he worked for a nonprofit organization. "I had a sneaking suspicion that it might be George W. Bush. I really liked him. The fact that he ultimately decided to run for President was like a dream come true."

With the skill of a veteran Reed had shifted the conversation back to Bush. As we rose to part, he smiled and made one last pitch. "The story is not about me or about any member of the political team," he said gravely. "It's about the President and his leadership and how he is inspiring the most extensive grassroots campaign in modern political history." Once you have moved millions, the taste never deserts you. ▀

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic and a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

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THE BUFFNESS DEFICIT

What Iraq needs is a homegrown professional police force. What it has is something else: think Police Academy meets The Dirty Dozen

The conversation was taking place in Khaldiyyah, and the subject was resistance. "The American forces and the American citizens, if they come here and treat us without respect, and we raise the white flag," a retired Iraqi army general was fulminating, "they will not respect us."

Khaldiyyah lies about an hour and a half northwest of Baghdad, on the road between Fallujah and Ramadi, two points of the much discussed "Sunni Triangle." Given the setting, the general's opinions were not surprising—but given his job description, they were a little discomfiting. The general was Ismail Turki Bou al-Khalifah, and this was the first appointment of his first day as the chief of the Khaldiyyah police department. Even as he vowed to fight crime wherever he found it, he made clear that he would not find it in resistance attacks on U.S. forces. He had no plans to apprehend Iraqis engaging in such attacks, nor did he plan to share information about them with locally stationed U.S. intelligence officers.

Pressed on this point, the general pressed back: "If you had a brother in this country in my position, and his country was occupied by foreigners, would you be happy that your brother would take reports to the Americans?"

Ismail retired from the army in 1993 but was now still dressed in his olive-green army uniform. He is fifty-three and has a modest paunch, an almost fair but deeply freckled face ("A *baby* face!" he blurted out exuberantly at one point, in English), and intent, shiny-penny eyes that he has a habit of widening and making pop at his frequent points of emphasis, as if he were constantly surprising himself. Despite the brand-newness of his job, there was no hint of a fresh start in his surroundings, and no feeling of initiative in the air. His office had been deprived of its door, and its walls, originally white, looked as if they had been scrubbed down with dirt. Eight men, wearing the uniform of the new, postwar Iraqi police or the uniform

of the old Iraqi police or the uniform of the Iraqi army or no uniform at all, were either sitting on a stripped, iron-framed bed opposite the general's battered wooden desk, standing in a row next to the bed, or hovering in the doorway. At a certain point one of them disappeared and returned with ice-cold cans of Mountain Dew.

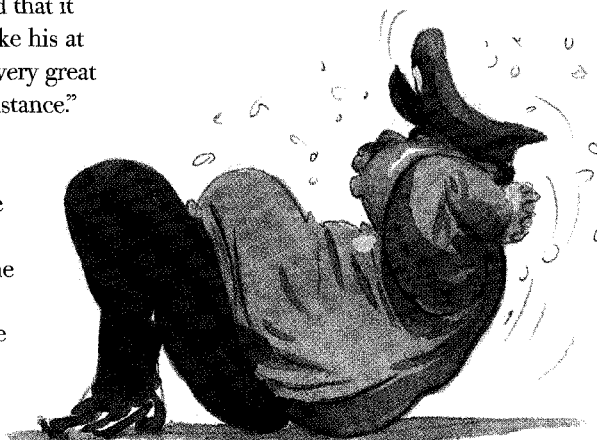
SECURITY **TISH DURKIN**

The general's desk was clear of everything except a battered red telephone and a glass ash-tray full of dead cigarettes, which was getting steadily fuller as he smoked. When the red phone rang, the general usually picked the receiver up an inch and put it down again without causing the slightest break in the flow of his conversation; this made plain that he either was or wished to seem abundantly certain of himself. When, for instance, he was told that it must be tough to take a job like his at a time like this, he replied, "Every great man can face a difficult circumstance."

In the difficult circumstance of reforming the Iraqi police force, the country could use more than a few great men. The institution faces the daunting task of vaulting—fast and while under fire—from a squalid record of performance to a stellar one. And although attacks by insurgents on the Iraqi police have become a staple of the news coverage of Iraq, in the long term such attacks may well be the least of the force's worries. Likely to be more abiding are the problems stemming from the corruption, ineptitude, and laxity that have long corroded the police force from within (and the depth of which would be hard to overstate); the rampant criminality that has emerged since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime; and the challenges posed by nonpolice groups that many Iraqis feel are far better suited (practically and morally) to fight crime. Most notable among these are the local and foreign ranks of the *mujaahideen*, and the many ad hoc religious

and political security details that have recently come into being.

I myself saw courage, industry, and good intentions in abundance among the Iraqi police, and more than once encountered officers who, recently attacked and still in bandages, were already back in uniform and on the job. Nevertheless, it's not unfair to say that the quality of Iraqi police work in the past ran the gamut from actively dreadful to passively dreadful, and that those serving in the ranks ranged from enthusiastic mafia-style enforcers for Saddam's regime to unenthusiastic mafia-style enforcers for Saddam's regime. Either way, officers were pathetically trained, pathetically equipped, and pathetically paid. Bribery routinely determined which crimes were investigated. According to one American MP, imme-

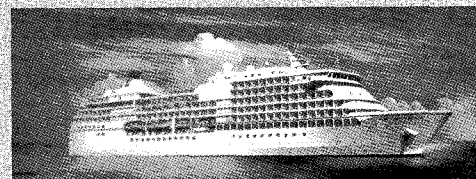


diately after the war officers at one Baghdad police station were stealing cars so as to have something to patrol in.

I got a sense of the situation when I struck up a conversation with an Iraqi shop owner one morning as we both waited for admission at the gates of the police headquarters in Baghdad. From his shop not long before, the man had been able to see the activities of a car-thieving ring; in plain sight criminals were divvying up the cars they had stolen, chopping up the old ones to resell the parts, and selling the new ones whole. He reported this to the police, and that very day the car thieves were arrested. But a few days later he was horrified to

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TEN TAX SCOFFLAWS

According to the General Accounting Office, 400,000 Americans have attempted tax evasion in the past two years, two thirds of them using illegal offshore credit-card accounts—a rampant trend. Many people fear the agency is out-gunned. But IRS investigators are still securing convictions. Here, from the IRS archives, are ten of the biggest tax scofflaws so far this century. —CHRISTOPHER SHEA



1. ANDERSON'S ARK & ASSOCIATES. Nine members of this tax scam, based in California and Costa Rica, have been convicted. The entity's founder awaits trial. From 1998 to 2001 Anderson's Ark stashed money from 1,500 taxpayers in offshore trusts, where the clients could access the money through debit cards. Anderson's then prepared fraudulent tax returns, claiming the money was spent for legitimate deductions. Estimated loss to the U.S. government: \$28 million.

2. VERNON JAMES, king of the slavery-reparations tax scammers, persuaded 300 African-American taxpayers that they were eligible for a "black investment tax credit," and sought more than \$8.4 million in bogus refunds on their behalf. In January of 2002 James was sentenced in Texas to six and a half years in prison.

3. RICHARD G. FLOWERS and five Oregon associates founded the Christian Patriot Association, a "warehouse bank" that served 900 tax evaders, who used aliases and false Social Security numbers to shield themselves from IRS scrutiny. The government lost \$5 million. Flowers received five years in prison in January of 2003.

4. BARRIE L. KONICOV. In October of 2001 a federal judge in Michigan sentenced this hypnotist and self-help guru to seven-plus years for distributing tips for tax evasion in "De-Taxing America" seminars. He himself failed to pay taxes in 1994–1996. The IRS found that 138 of his customers cost the government \$3.3 million.

5. BRADFORD G. BROWN. Brown, a doctor, diverted some of his earnings to secret accounts in 1994 and 1995, and failed to pay most of his taxes in later years. Last May he was sentenced in Georgia to forty-one months and ordered to repay \$3.04 million.

6. JOHN MODENA. In November of 2000 he was sentenced in Michigan to sixty months for creating false trusts to help five brothers avoid \$3 million in income taxes. The brothers did not use bank accounts and relied on cash to remain anonymous.

7. ALFRED B. REECE. A tax preparer, Reece submitted 633 tax returns in the 1990s that were padded with bogus charitable contributions, theft and gambling losses, and medical and dental expenses. The IRS pinpointed \$2.9 million in false refund claims. In July of 2000 Reece was sentenced in Kansas to five years in prison.

8. ANTHONY A. AND DOROTHY M. MITCHELL. This California couple, both in their seventies, prove that age is no defense in tax-fraud cases. They admitted in 2002 to storing \$3.7 million, most of it earned from the sale of a painting business, in offshore accounts. Anthony also sent more than \$1 million to a Cayman Islands bank account. Total loss to the government: \$3 million. Anthony received eight months in prison, Dorothy six months of home confinement.

9. TERENCE M. CLARKE. A former CEO of Katun Corporation, a copier-parts distributor, Clark from 1997 to 2001 underreported his income by more than \$3.4 million, for a tax loss of \$1.4 million. Last June he was sentenced in Minnesota to two years.

10. THEODORE M. McANLIS. Last July this golf-course architect was sentenced in Florida to ten years. He had not filed with the IRS since 1977, evading \$1.3 million in taxes through the use of trusts, a "sham church," and false Social Security numbers. Unlike golfers, the tax code does not allow mulligans.

Christopher Shea writes a column about academia for The Boston Globe's "Ideas" section.

receive a visit in his shop from the thieves, who informed him that they had paid \$5,000 to the police for their release—and that they now expected him to pay them \$12,000, unless he wished to be killed, along with his entire family.

Until recently the police headquarters in Baghdad was situated on the same grounds as the police academy, which is center stage for U.S. efforts to help reform the Iraqi police. By turns these efforts come across as admirable, futile, and darkly hilarious—as I saw for myself when I visited a human-rights class at the academy. I watched as an American MP prepared his students for an examination by going over the exact questions that would be on the exam. These questions included the following:

"True or false—police have to treat everyone fairly and the same except for those who have an opposing opinion of the government." (*False!*)

"True or false—there are no limits on a person's freedom of religion." (*True!*)

"True or false—you have to follow all orders of those appointed over you even if they are illegal." (*False!*)

Many hands shot up each time, and the answers were almost always right, but one could practically see the concepts involved whizzing over the students' heads, crashing into the walls, and falling to the floor in a crumpled heap.

A week or so later I observed a training session conducted by Brenton Fitzgerald Tyrrell, a member of Meteoric Tactical Solutions—a private security firm, made up largely of former members of South Africa's Special Forces. MTS has been engaged to help train what is envisioned as the "sharp edge" of the Iraqi police force: the elite who will raid houses, scale walls, free hostages, and so on.

"Every single guy smokes in Iraq, and no one believes in physical training," Tyrrell told me. He's a compact, fastidious man who looks dry-cleaned even in jeans, and his muscle-to-fat ratio appears to be about the inverse of that of his trainees, who on the day of my visit consisted of

a dozen chatty, egg-shaped young men for whom twenty sit-ups was clearly an Everest of exertion. Despite their aggregate buffness deficit, however, the men could not be accused of inactivity. Already employed by the police, and considered indispensable, they had to squeeze their training in among their current duties, some of which were precisely the "sharp edge" missions they were now training for. A number of them showed up not having slept in days, and the stress of this was plain. When granted a water break during their training, almost all began to smoke before they drank.

The situation appeared hopeless—but the South Africans insisted it was not. At first, Tyrrell told me, most of his trainees can hardly run a lap around the field without vomiting, and have such bad aim they couldn't shoot an elephant that was standing still. Yet after a few weeks of sit-ups, drills, and target practice, he said, their performance improves dramatically—with often graphic results. One day soon after a training cycle had been completed, for instance, Tyrrell was eating his lunch when a few of his former students ran up to him, full of excitement, and urged him to come see what they had just accomplished. Tyrrell followed them to their car—and there, crammed inside the trunk, were a few well and truly shot criminal corpses, riddled with bullets and dripping with blood.

As it happened, the day that I spent with Tyrrell was the day on which his latest batch of trainees were supposed to take the first big step toward such moments of triumph. After their warm-up, Tyrrell told me with discernible pleasure, the men would not be staging the usual make-believe raids on make-believe houses. Instead they would be heading out to the target range, where they would start learning to take real aim with real firearms. But when they arrived, there was one problem. For reasons known only to the procurement gods, there were no guns for them to shoot with—or bullets either. ▀

Tish Durkin is a freelance journalist based in Baghdad.



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A METEORIC DISAPPEARANCE

Jack Paar (1918–2004)

If all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players, with their exits and their entrances, then on the whole Jack Paar preferred exits. The most famous line of his TV career accompanied a walkout ("There must be a better way of making a living than this"), and though NBC eventually coaxed him back ("I have looked, and there isn't"), it wasn't for long. Paar enjoyed saying goodbye, and put a lot of effort into it. For his final *Tonight Show*—on March 29, 1962—he assembled an audience of friends and colleagues and announced that there'd never be another gathering like it until his funeral. Three years later, for his final *Jack Paar Program*, he did the opposite: the studio was empty except for one lone audience member, his German shepherd, and he ended by calling "Come on, Leica!," picking up his stool, and leading her into the wings.

If the must-be-a-better-way flounce was the splashiest Paar exit, the elegiac dog act is the insiders' exit, the one the pros love. In the last episode of *The Larry Sanders Show*, Garry Shandling's parody host, seeking inspiration for his own sign-off, watches an old kinescope of Paar's farewell and chokes up—either because Paar is genuinely moving or because Shandling is mocking the reverence in which the hard-nosed hosts of today hold the meanderings of a long-gone predecessor.

Johnny Carson signing off after thirty years made less of a hullabaloo than Paar signing off after thirty months. Few fellows have been so eager to get into show business and then so eager to get out of it. He quit school and, despite a stammer, was an announcer on a Michigan radio station at the age of sixteen. After the war Jack Benny got him a gig at NBC as his summer replacement, and RKO signed him as an actor. Then both his radio and movie contracts lapsed, and Fred Allen took to musing about "the young man who had that meteoric disappearance."

That's really Paar's entire career: a meteoric disappearance. Television is about showing up—night after night, decade after decade, like Johnny. Jay, Dave, and Conan have all been doing their respective shifts more than twice as long as Paar hosted *The Tonight Show*, and in all three cases you'd be surprised if a farewell show was planned for this decade or the first half of the next. Likewise, it's hard to imagine anything unusual or surprising—with the exception of heart surgery and celebrity gubernatorial announcements—happening on those shows between now and the end. But so what?

Steve Allen, *Tonight's* founding host, was a prodigious talent of the old school: composer, lyricist, pianist, singer, comic, actor. His *Tonight Show* was a show. Taking up the reins in 1957, Paar inaugurated the "talk show." Merv Griffin likes to call the format the only "art form" invented by TV; everything else—the quizzes, the soaps, the sitcoms—came from radio. We take it for granted now, but imagine trying to explain to the execs the logic of the furniture arrangements: a couch alongside a desk next to an orchestra. Until Paar did it, a talk show was at least potentially oxymoronic.

Paar's show was a transitional phase, and not just because guests still sort of did things (Cassius Clay recited a poem—"The Legend of Cassius Clay"—accompanied by Liberace at the piano). The talkers Paar favored were the likes of Oscar Levant, Bea Lillie, George S. Kaufman, Hermione Gingold, Peter Ustinov, Elsa Maxwell, Robert Morley—theatricals, raconteurs, anecdotalists, British people. In my early days in broadcasting I was a bit player on a BBC show that valiantly upheld what was left of that tradition, featuring, indeed, many of the same guests—Miss Gingold, Sir Peter, and so forth. And at my tender age I found myself vaguely irked by the urbanity, the

hard-polished parquet of the anecdote. As the host wrapped up an interview with one grande dame of the West End, she protested, in a phrase that encapsulates an entire school of reminiscence, "But dahling, I haven't told my Larry"—as in her Laurence Olivier anecdote.

Such figures are conspicuous by their absence on the couches of Paar's successors. When, say, Peter O'Toole turns up on *Letterman* recounting David Lean camel stories, it doesn't seem quite right. Introducing Kenneth Branagh, Dave might as well have been ushering on a Bhutanese yak herdsman: "He's a *raconteur*, if you will." Dread word. Afterward a CBS big shot said to me, "I can't stand that guy. He tries too hard." You couldn't make the same damning criticism of Matt Dillon, slumped in denim, barely able to rouse himself to plug the movie.



TIME LIFE PICTURES

Yet Paar's talkers drew as big an audience as *Letterman* and Leno and their tight list of inarticulate screen celebrities combined, and his was the classic water-cooler show. Paar and his guests were among the last beneficiaries of the great universal popular culture of mid-century, in which operatic divas and slapstick comics were all part of the same landscape. Today we have unpopular popular culture—not Marshall McLuhan's global village but a global housing

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**MARK
STEYN**

project of mutually hostile ghettos. On the twenty-first-century *Tonight Show* the musical guests are relegated to twenty-seven minutes past midnight, because the country fans hate the hip-hop, and the hip-hoppers hate the Lite FM stuff, and if you put 'em on any earlier, the audience tunes out. Even the big-time movie stars—the Leos and the Camerons—are pushed further and further past midnight. And the first half of Dave and Jay is closer to Steve Allen than to Jack Paar—skits with stagehands, man-in-the-street stuff, animal acts: ironic vaudeville. Less talk, more show. If the talk show really is TV's own art form, it's going the way of the Hollywood western and the Broadway musical.

Perhaps Paar instinctively understood this. Four decades back you'd get to the office and they'd say, "Hey, did you see what Jack Paar did last night?" But most of the did-you-see moments were subversions of his own format: he'd send a guest off for being drunk, he'd book a comic and refuse to laugh at the jokes, he'd switch cue cards and sabotage the duet, he'd get bored with the singer and cut the song off halfway through. You can do that sort of thing only so often, and certainly not for thirty years; "meteoric disappearance" seemed to be built into the show's identity. His opening theme was "Everything's Coming Up Roses"—which at one level is your basic showbiz anthem, but at another, as the Act One finale of *Gypsy*, is a kind of musical breakdown for a character going off the rails. "Mercurial" is the adjective Paar's friends settled on. He "took on" Walter Winchell—a sagging bully for a fading medium roughed up by the cocky young bully of a rising one. But he cried a lot, too.

If you wanted to come up with the perfect name for a parody TV host, you'd be hard put to improve on Jack Paar—Jack Norm, Jack Average, Jack Nightly, who's always reliable, always the same, always at par. But Jack couldn't do that. When he made way for his successor, Dick Cavett heard someone say,

"If Carson's on that show ten years, he will never shed a single tear." To which someone replied, "For which I will be profoundly grateful."

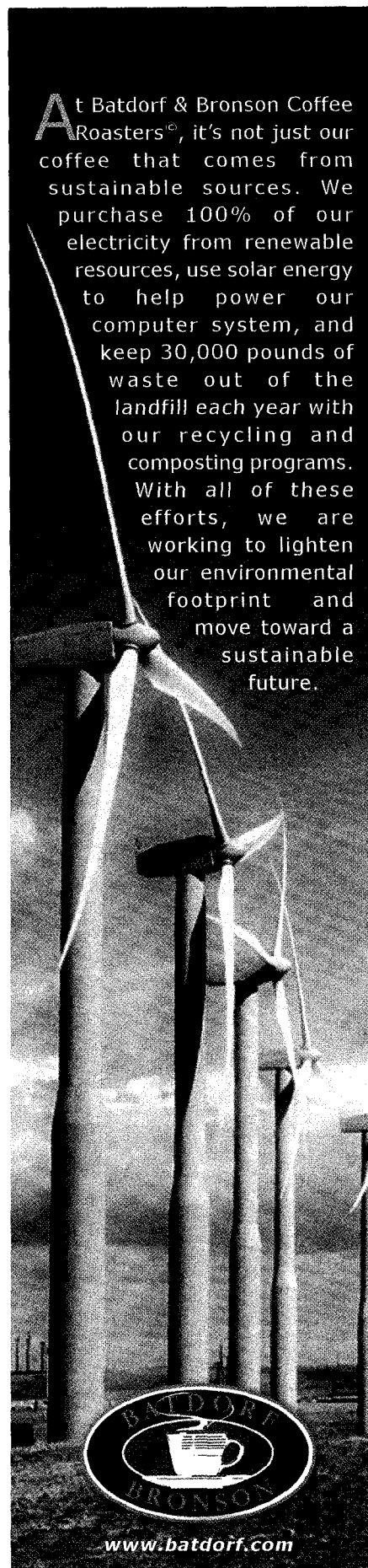
One night a couple of decades on, Jack returned to the show, as a guest on Johnny's couch; if you freeze the frame, the two silver foxes could almost be brothers. But then you look closer—the rueful tilt of Jack's head, the angular snap of Johnny's. Carson's voice is brisk and assured; Paar's is wistful and oddly childlike. Johnny didn't do "mercurial." If the talk show is an oxymoron, Carson invented an identity to match: affable and remote, familiar and unknowable. Paar made an entertainment out of his own pathologies: as *Newsweek* put it, "Russian roulette with commercials." Letterman, some say, is his heir. But only up to a point. He'll permit himself to muse, apropos Matt Dillon's monosyllabic grunting, that perhaps it's the lead paint in the dressing room—but only after Dillon has wrapped up and left the set. Letterman is cranky but controlled—Paar for the course.

As for the original, after 1965 he finally achieved the meteoric disappearance he'd been racing for since his radio days. He bought a TV station in Maine, made some travel documentaries; if he ever missed his one brief shining moment, he was better than Steve Allen at concealing his need to get it back. He returned for the last time in 1997, for what proved to be the all-time highest-rated *American Masters* documentary on PBS. As often happens with so-called "public service" broadcasting, the bosses wanted everything shorter and snappier—the only way ignorant executives understand "pace" and "energy." They picked the wrong guy. "I will not have a clip show," Paar told them, putting his foot down. "Look, I've walked off three shows..."

It was the last show, the last threatened walkout, the perfect Jack Paar epitaph. ▀

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's *Telegraph Group*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and other publications.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

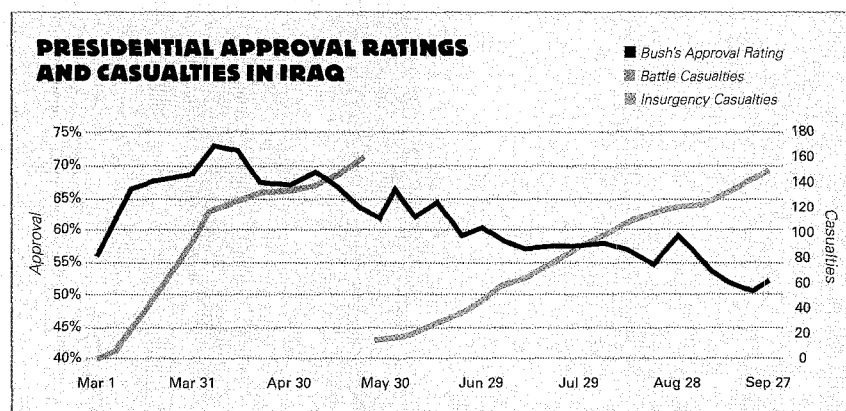
The kind of body count Americans can tolerate; the aggrieved boyfriend as terrorist; why the "dirty bomb" threat is real; finally—the truth about bullies and their victims

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Casualties of War

The American public can tolerate far higher casualties than is commonly thought, particularly if they are incurred in humanitarian missions; what it cannot tolerate is the prospect of defeat. This thesis, originally advanced by Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi in their book *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (2004), is borne out by their recent analysis of polling data regarding the Iraq War and its aftermath. American reactions to combat casualties, the authors argue, tend to vary depending on the "frame" in which those casualties are viewed. If the mission appears to be going well, as in post-Inchon Korea, Panama, and the 1991 Gulf War, public approval for the President tends to rise even as casualties increase, in what Feaver, Gelpi, and the study's third co-author, Jason Reifler, term the "rally round the flag effect." If the public perceives the mission as going badly, however, as happened in Vietnam after the Tet Offensive of 1968 and in Lebanon after the Beirut barracks bombing of 1983, then further casualties will produce a backlash and a drop in presidential approval ratings. Thus far this pattern has held true for Iraq: President Bush's approval ratings rose during combat operations (even as the number of casualties soared) and then fell once guerrilla insurgency, with its suggestion of quagmire, replaced battlefield combat as what the authors call the "dominant media frame" for Iraq. The President's principal political challenge, then, seems to be persuading the country that American deaths are the price of a final victory and not a sign of a looming debacle.

—"Paying the Human Costs of War: Iraq 2003," Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, Jason Reifler, Triangle Institute for Security Studies and Duke University



THE NATION

One Man's Terrorist ...

Evaluating the success of American law enforcement's post-9/11 battle with terrorism may depend on just how one defines the term "terrorist," according to a recent analysis of Justice Department data. In the two-year period following the World Trade Center attacks, federal investigative agencies referred significantly more cases classified as "terrorism" (3,500) to prosecutors than in the two years prior to the attacks. More such cases (730) were also prosecuted, and more convictions

were won (341). Yet during the two years after the attacks, only sixteen people were sentenced to five years or more in prison for terrorism—fewer than during the two years preceding 9/11. Moreover, this "terrorist" tally includes not only the would-be shoe bomber Richard Reid but also such threats to national security as a Georgia man who detonated a pipe bomb in his girlfriend's empty car and a Texas man who conspired from his prison cell to assassinate a federal judge. Other facts cast additional doubt on the efficacy of the Justice De-

partment's wide net: for instance, federal prosecutors deemed only 41 percent of the terrorism referrals they received worth pursuing (whereas 68 percent of all criminal cases referred to the department were prosecuted); and the majority of terrorism convictions (276 out of 341) resulted in no prison at all or sentences of less than a year. Even among those convicted within the narrower category of "international terrorism," the median sentence was fourteen days—the stuff of traffic violations, not al-Qaeda operations.

—"Criminal Terrorism Enforcement Since the 9/11/01 Attacks," Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, Syracuse University

The "Dirty Bomb" Scenario

After Jose Padilla was arrested in 2002 for allegedly planning a "dirty bomb" attack, Attorney General John Ashcroft described such a device—conventional explosives wrapped around radioactive contaminants—as an instrument of "mass death and injury." A team at the National Defense University has spent the past year assessing the real nature of the threat, and its findings are disturbing: a successful dirty-bomb attack might contaminate an area the size of the Washington Mall, and the "maximum credible events" envisioned by the report could kill dozens or hundreds, sicken thousands, and ruin a metropolis (contaminated buildings would probably have to be razed and the debris carted off, along with a meter of topsoil, in what experts call "muck and truck"). Worse, terrorists might achieve the "dirty" results without the bomb, by quietly releasing radiation through smoke or an aerosol, so that the damage would be done before the attack was even noticed. To explore the consequences of such an attack, researchers looked at a real-life disaster that occurred in the city of Goiânia, Brazil, in 1987. Junk-metal pirates salvaged cesium from an abandoned radiation lab and passed the "glowing blue material" to family and friends. The cesium eventually spread through buses, ambulances, animal fur,

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bars, and restaurants, until 112,000 Brazilians were tested for radiation in an Olympic-size soccer stadium; 249 people were determined to have been contaminated, forty-nine were hospitalized, and five died. (Goiânia, bitter from the ensuing economic isolation and stigma, added the universal insignia for radioactivity to its flag.)

—"Dirty Bombs: The Threat Revisited," Peter D. Zimmerman with Cheryl Loeb, National Defense University

The Thick Red Line

In Chicago an African-American earning more than \$90,480 a year is 2.3 times as likely to be turned down for a home loan as a white person making less than \$37,700. This remarkable finding, contained in a new report from the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), helps explain why less than half of black families own their homes (compared with three quarters of white families), and why this racial divide in homeownership is likely to increase. In 2002 African-Americans overall were 2.38 times as likely to have a mortgage application denied as were whites (up from 2.06 in 1997), and this disparity actually increases with income level: a low-income African-American is only 1.55 times as likely to be denied a mortgage as a low-income white, whereas an upper-income African-American is 2.83 times as likely to be turned down as a white of similar income. The good news: mortgage-denial rates for blacks overall have decreased (from 57 percent to 30 percent) since 1997, and the number of home loans blacks receive has increased (from 139,544 a year to 189,817). But 72 percent of this increase, ACORN points out, consists of higher-interest loans, suggesting not only that blacks will continue to be far less likely than whites to own homes, but also that those who do will be more heavily encumbered by debt.

—"The Great Divide: Home Purchase Mortgage Lending Nationally and in 115 Metropolitan Areas," Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

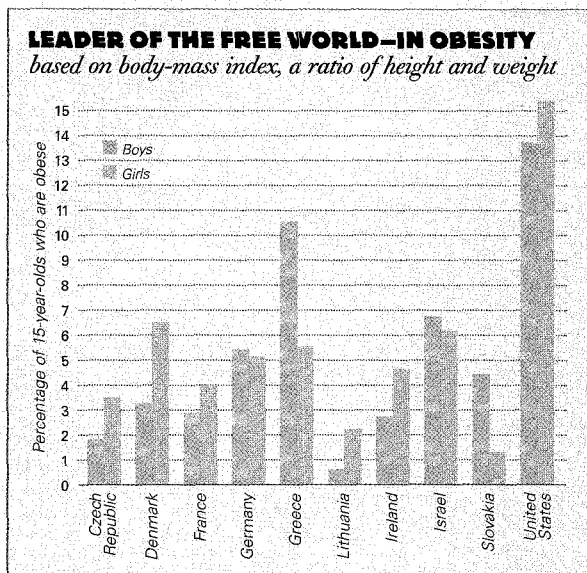
SOCIETY

My Big Fat American Child

Maybe those lawsuits against McDonald's weren't so silly after all. Two new studies find that American teens are heavier than their counterparts in most other industrialized countries, and that fast food probably bears much of the blame. According to a study of fifteen-year-olds in fifteen developed nations, 15 percent of girls and nearly 14 percent of boys in the United States are classified as obese; the next highest numbers (5.5 percent of girls and almost 11 percent of boys) come from Greece. (In slender France the numbers are four and not quite three percent, and in skinny Lithuania two and one percent.) Meanwhile, another recent study finds that nearly a third of U.S.

children aged four to nineteen eat at least one fast-food meal daily—and that they take in 187 calories more a day than those who don't, for an average of about six extra pounds a year.

—"Body Mass Index and Overweight in Adolescents in 13 European Countries, Israel, and the United States," Inge Lissau et al., *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*; "Effects of Fast-Food Consumption on Energy Intake and Diet Quality Among Children in a National Household Survey," Shanthly Bowman et al., *Pediatrics*



Machiavelli for Twelve-Year-Olds

In news that will doubtless come as no surprise to anyone who has survived junior high, a study published in the December issue of *Pediatrics* finds that sixth-grade bullies tend to be popular and psychologically strong, and are often viewed as the "coolest" by their classmates. Their victims, on the other hand, are typically miserable: lonely, unstable, and socially marginalized. Commonsensical as these findings seem, they fly in the face of previous research—dutifully repeated by countless parents to their bullied offspring—suggesting that bullies actually suffer from depression and low self-esteem. Those earlier findings, it seems, mistakenly relied on "self-reports of being a bully" while ignoring the reality that, as the authors of the *Pediatrics* report

dryly point out, "it is unlikely that bullies as a group provide accurate self-reports of how they treat others." When researchers instead use a system that relies on the consensus of a large group of students, it becomes clear that the only bullies likely to suffer depression are those who are both bullies and victims—victims, that is, who take out their misery on students unlucky enough to be even further down the junior high food chain.

—"Bullying Among Young Adolescents: The Strong, the Weak, and the Troubled," Jaana Juvonen, Sandra Graham, Mark A. Schuster, *Pediatrics*

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit
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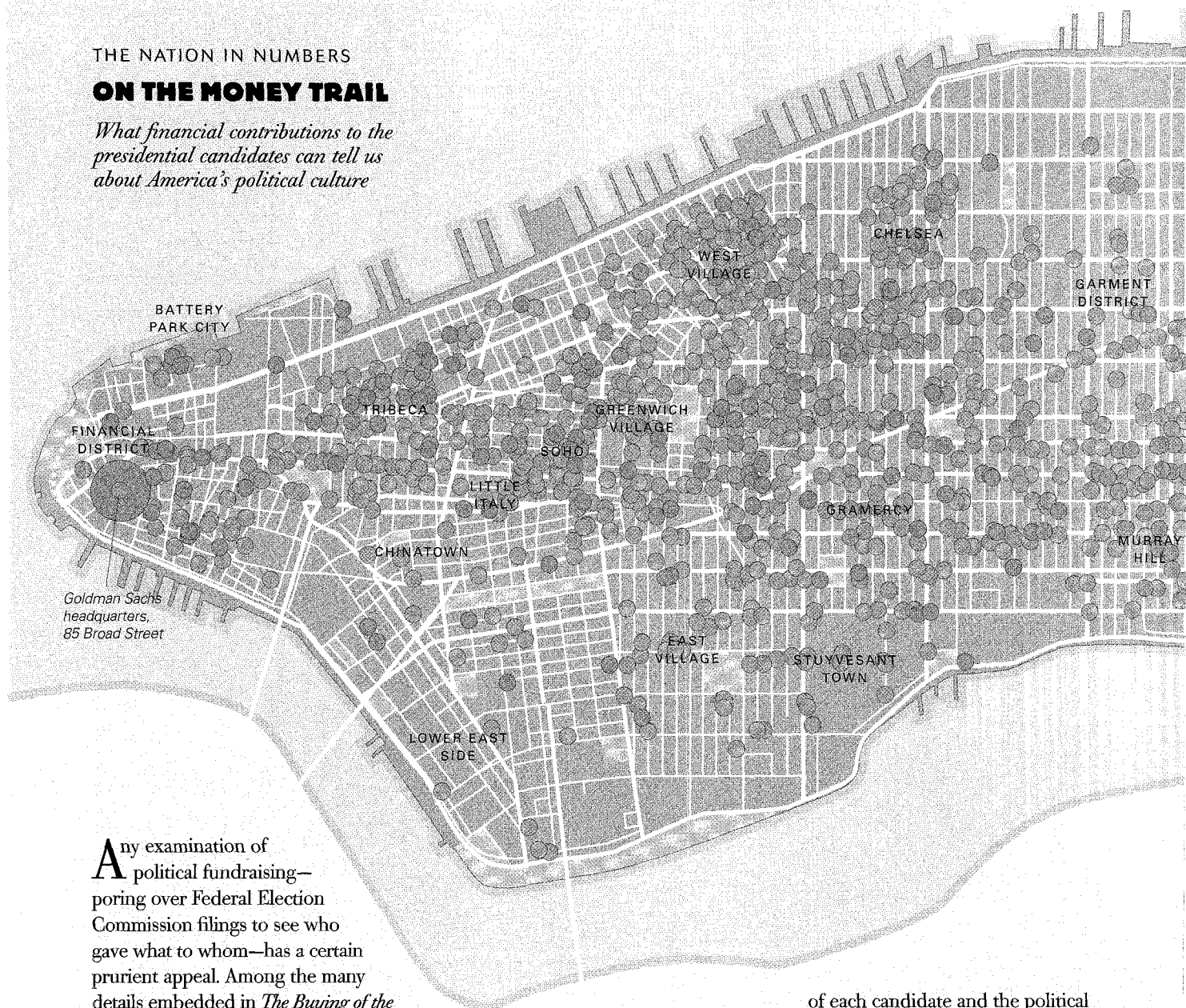
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ON THE MONEY TRAIL

What financial contributions to the presidential candidates can tell us about America's political culture



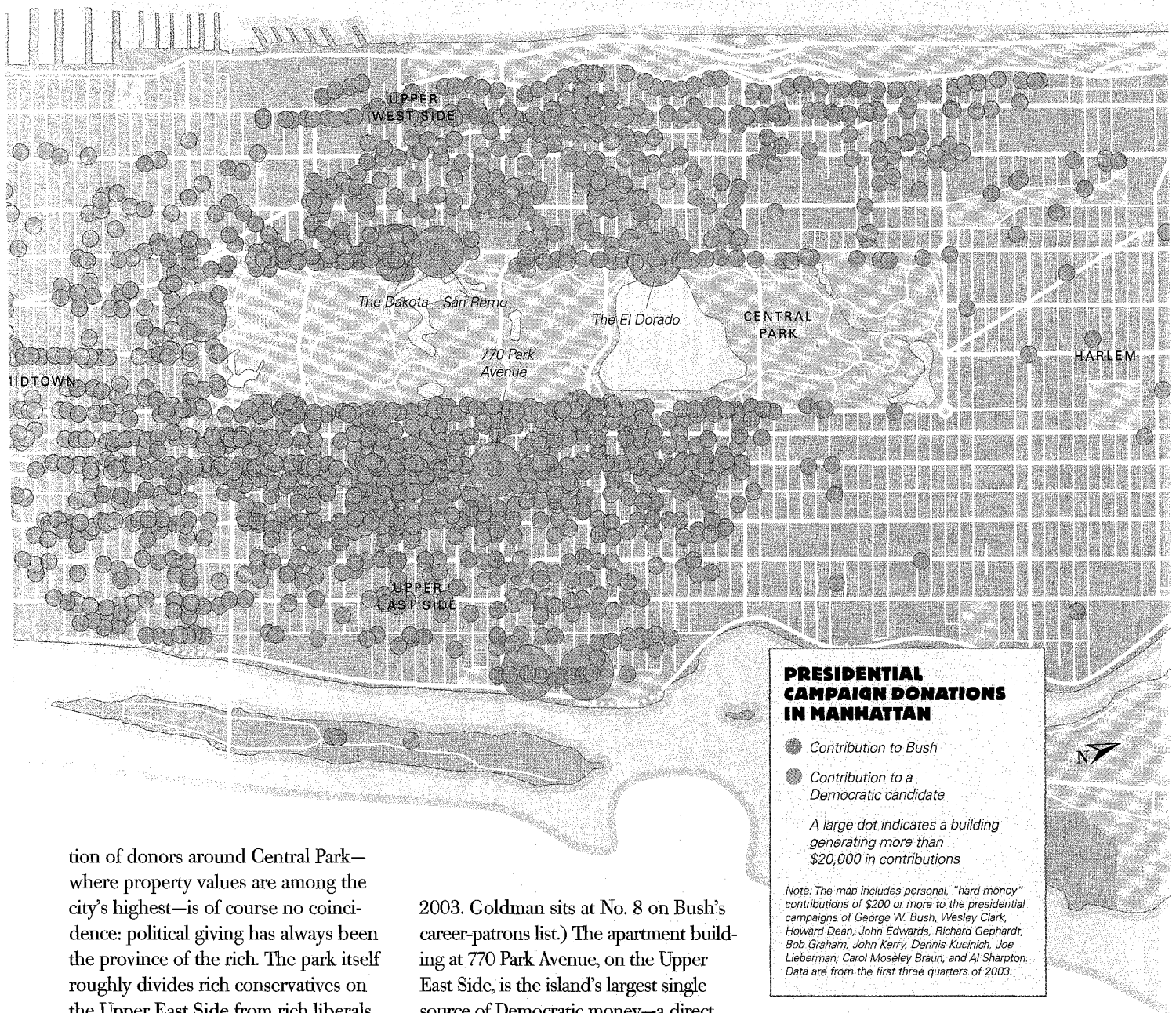
Any examination of political fundraising—poring over Federal Election Commission filings to see who gave what to whom—has a certain prurient appeal. Among the many details embedded in *The Buying of the President 2004*—the latest in a series of books by Charles Lewis, who is the executive director of the Center for Public Integrity—are rankings of the top “career patrons” for each of this year’s major presidential candidates. (Private corporations, of course, cannot donate directly to candidates; the career-patron lists were compiled by adding up the individual contributions from each institution over the course of the candidates’ political lives.) Howard Dean’s current list confirms that he was indeed the darling of the academic elite: contributors from prestigious universities put Harvard, Stanford, and the University of California among his top ten patrons. John Edwards, a former trial lawyer, can count eight law firms among his top ten. Richard Gephardt, long a

champion of industrial protectionism and workers’ rights, derived much of his support from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Teamsters. Nestled among the church groups and broadcasting companies on Al Sharpton’s career-patron list, at once out of place and perfectly at home, sits Don King Productions, the company of Mike Tyson’s erstwhile boxing promoter. And Enron remains George W. Bush’s all-time top backer. (See career-patron lists on page 48.)

But looking at the demographic and geographic sources of presidential-campaign money doesn’t just provide information about candidates’ respective political bases—it also tells us a great deal about both the electoral prospects

of each candidate and the political sociology of the nation.

The map above plots individual presidential-campaign contributions throughout Manhattan, by street address of the donor, for the first three quarters of 2003. (This map includes contributions from \$200, the amount below which disclosure to the FEC is not required, up to \$2,000, the maximum allowable under current campaign-finance law. Due to FEC data reporting and filing errors, the map may also include a small number of donations under \$200.) Red denotes contributions to the Bush campaign, blue to Democratic candidates. The preponderance of blue dots—especially around Greenwich Village and the East Village—clearly demonstrates Manhattan’s essentially liberal character. The heavy concentra-



tion of donors around Central Park—where property values are among the city's highest—is of course no coincidence: political giving has always been the province of the rich. The park itself roughly divides rich conservatives on the Upper East Side from rich liberals on the Upper West Side, though of course people of all political persuasions live on both sides.

Buildings that generated more than \$20,000 in donations to either Bush or Democratic candidates appear as over-size dots on the map. (The \$2,000 limit on individual contributions to any campaign means that these buildings represent at least ten donors.) The large red dot at 85 Broad Street, for instance, near the southern tip of the island, is the headquarters of Goldman Sachs. (Goldman employees have given generously to several of the Democratic candidates as well—and that accounts for the blue dot on top of the red dot—but Bush received the lion's share from this address over the first three quarters of

2003. Goldman sits at No. 8 on Bush's career-patrons list.) The apartment building at 770 Park Avenue, on the Upper East Side, is the island's largest single source of Democratic money—a direct result of the fact that key fundraisers for Howard Dean, John Kerry, and John Edwards all have apartments there. Other addresses from which big sums emanate include the El Dorado, at 300 Central Park West; the Dakota, at 1 West Seventy-second Street; and the San Remo—which some years ago rejected Madonna's application—at 146 Central Park West.

The map of the United States on page 49 shows patterns in individual presidential-campaign contributions through the end of 2003, this time plotted by ZIP code. The pattern here loosely conforms to that of the 2000 presidential-election map: a vast swath of red framed by blue on both coasts. Yet this map—in part

simply because it is broken into areas smaller than states—provides some clues about which areas will be most competitive in this year's election.

Pennsylvania, for example, displays a patchwork of reds and blues that reflects the state's political and socioeconomic diversity, and shows that it will be a swing state this year. A large vertical slice of the Midwest, reaching down the river valleys from Iowa through Missouri and Arkansas, is similarly mottled; indeed, many political analysts expect all these states to be closely contested in November. A vein of blue running up through Arizona and New Mexico into Colorado suggests the changing demographics of the Southwest, which—partly because of an influx of retirees and

Hispanics—is becoming increasingly Democratic. All three of these states are likely to be ardently courted by the presidential nominees of both parties.

A few caveats are in order with this map. Most obvious, it visually underemphasizes the financial and electoral clout of cities relative to that of geographically large but sparsely settled rural areas. Moreover, the donor community is not representative of the voting community as a whole—according to the Center for Responsive Politics, fewer than three Americans in a thousand contribute \$200 or more to a party, a political-action committee, or a federal campaign. And donors are overwhelmingly white, rich, and male: Clyde Wilcox, of Georgetown University, has reported that of those who donated to presidential campaigns in 2000, 96 percent were white, 86 per-

cent earned more than \$100,000 a year, and 70 percent were male. Since many white, rich males are Republican, the map is perhaps redder than a map based on voting preferences would be. Yet in a few cases the map makes the Democrats look stronger than they are. For instance, both Alabama and Mississippi are solidly Republican. But a combination of light donations overall (because these states are poor) and heavy giving by trial lawyers (who overwhelmingly support Democrats) makes portions of these states look Democratic.

Caveats aside, the map yields several insights. First, though Bush's advantage in rural areas is to be expected (because Republicans tend to do better in rural areas), it is nonetheless noteworthy. Since the 1970s, while Democrats focused on generating large donations from unions

and other groups for "party-building activities" (the kind of soft-money contributions that have been outlawed by the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance-reform law), Republicans have consistently invested heavily in, and raised more than Democrats from, direct-mail solicitations. Three decades of work building up mailing lists, honing messages, and making rain in areas where large fundraising events are impractical has paid off handsomely for the Republicans. Indeed, for all of Howard Dean's vaunted success in raising large amounts of money in small donations over the Internet, Bush has actually gotten slightly more in small sums than Dean—with more of Bush's contributions presumably arriving the old-fashioned way, through the mail. The dark-red coloring of much of rural America illustrates the extent of Bush's success in pulling money out of these areas—and the nearly uniform failure of Democrats to do the same.

More surprising than Bush's rural fundraising success is his relative success in major urban centers, which are often presumed to be areas of Democratic advantage. New York, Los Angeles, and the District of Columbia—the nation's three largest sources of campaign money—still tilt Democratic in their giving by at least a two-to-one margin. But in eleven of the twenty largest cities in the United States, Bush has raised more than the entire Democratic field combined. When one prominent Democratic fund-raiser looked at this map, he marveled that city after city showed parity—or even a Republican advantage—in political giving.

The source of Bush's success in cities and their suburbs is his extraordinary nationwide network of "bundlers"—people with the contacts, power, and inclination to solicit large numbers of \$2,000 checks from friends, associates, and employees. Considering the low rate of political giving generally, it is hard to overstate the importance of fund-raisers who can personally reach out and marshal support that wouldn't otherwise be forthcoming. In Boston, for example, typically high Democratic donations have been at least partially offset by the efforts of a single family—the Egans, of Hopkinton, Massachusetts—who reportedly raised \$1.2 million for Bush at a

THE BUYING OF THE PRESIDENT 2004

*Top ten contributors to selected presidential candidates**

George W. Bush

Enron Corp.	\$602,625
MBNA Corp.	\$597,041
Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc.	\$564,404
PricewaterhouseCoopers	\$485,448
Vinson & Elkins	\$476,400
UBS AG Inc.	\$474,300
Credit Suisse First Boston	\$473,650
Goldman Sachs Group	\$409,449
Bass Brothers Enterprises	\$397,427
Ernst & Young LLP	\$384,154

Howard Dean

Time Warner	\$73,636
University of California	\$45,425
Microsoft Corp.	\$45,413
IBM Corp.	\$37,887
Harvard University	\$35,276
Maverick Farms/Anne and Arthur Berndt, Sharon, Vermont	\$29,500
Howard Dean/Fund for a Healthy America	\$28,852
Stanford University	\$25,680
Citigroup	\$24,130
U.S. Federal Government	\$22,658

John Edwards

Shangri-La Entertainment	\$907,000
Baron & Budd, P. C.	\$408,250
Giradi & Keese	\$362,475
Motley Rice LLC	\$245,600
Turner & Associates	\$202,000
Goldman Sachs Group	\$169,000
Williams & Bailey	\$165,250

Wilkes & McHugh	\$134,000
Law Offices of Wade Byrd	\$129,600
Minor & Associates	\$129,000

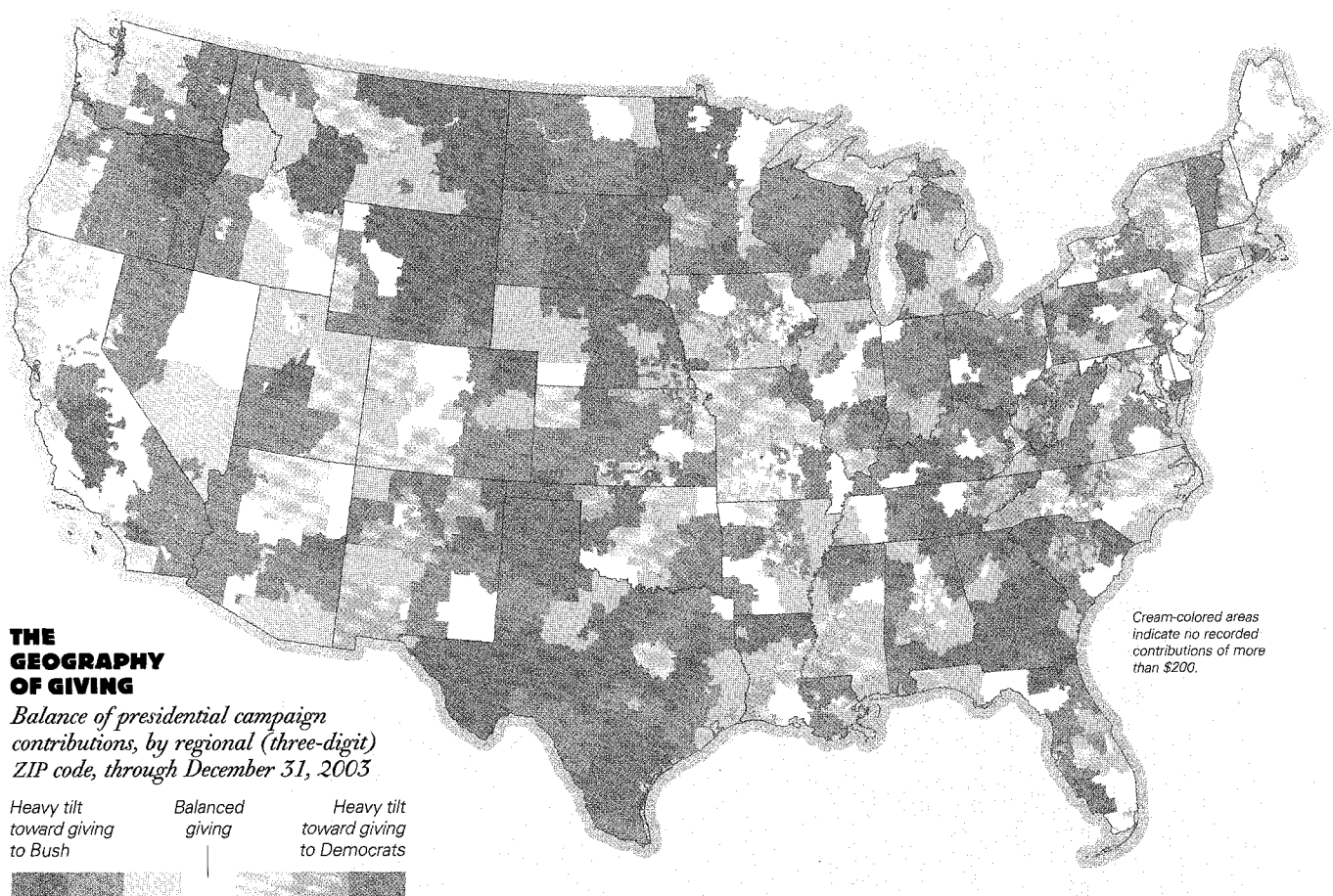
John Kerry

Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo	\$232,736
FleetBoston Financial Corp.	\$182,937
Time Warner	\$145,435
Hale and Dorr LLP	\$129,858
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom	\$125,550
Harvard University	\$124,250
Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolis Inc.	\$122,300
Verner, Lipfert, Bernhard, McPherson & Hand/Piper Rudnick	\$121,550
Citigroup	\$116,656
Goldman Sachs Group	\$110,600

Al Sharpton

Inner City Broadcasting Corp.	\$27,300
Radio One, Inc.	\$15,500
Don King Productions Inc.	\$15,400
Zoe Ministries	\$15,400
Raw Talent	\$14,200
AFSCME	\$14,100
Essence Communications	\$14,000
Rev. Al Sharpton/National Action Network	\$12,652
Maravilla Productions Inc.	\$10,000
Canaan Baptist Church	\$9,050

Data: Center for Public Integrity. *Includes corporate contributions, contributions to political-action committees and non-profit groups associated with each candidate, and the personal contributions of employees of each institution. All contributions throughout each candidate's political career are included.



party held at their home last June.

As of the end of December the Bush campaign counted 151 fundraisers who had raised more than \$200,000 apiece, and 241 who had raised at least \$100,000. The campaign—evidently hoping to evoke images of the Old West—dubs the former group “Rangers” and the latter group “Pioneers.” (It has also added the designation “Mavericks” for fundraisers under forty who raise \$50,000 or more.) As of the end of December, Rangers and Pioneers had accounted for—at a bare minimum—at least 41 percent of total giving to the Bush campaign.

Bundling is hardly a new phenomenon. And many factors help to account for the size and success of Bush’s fund-raising network—including his incumbency, the alignment of his policies with the interests of businesses and the wealthy, and, to a lesser extent, his ability to use and extend his father’s network, rather than having to build his own from scratch.

But perhaps most important to Bush’s fundraising success is the application of simple business practices to the old-boys’ network that has always existed. Poli-

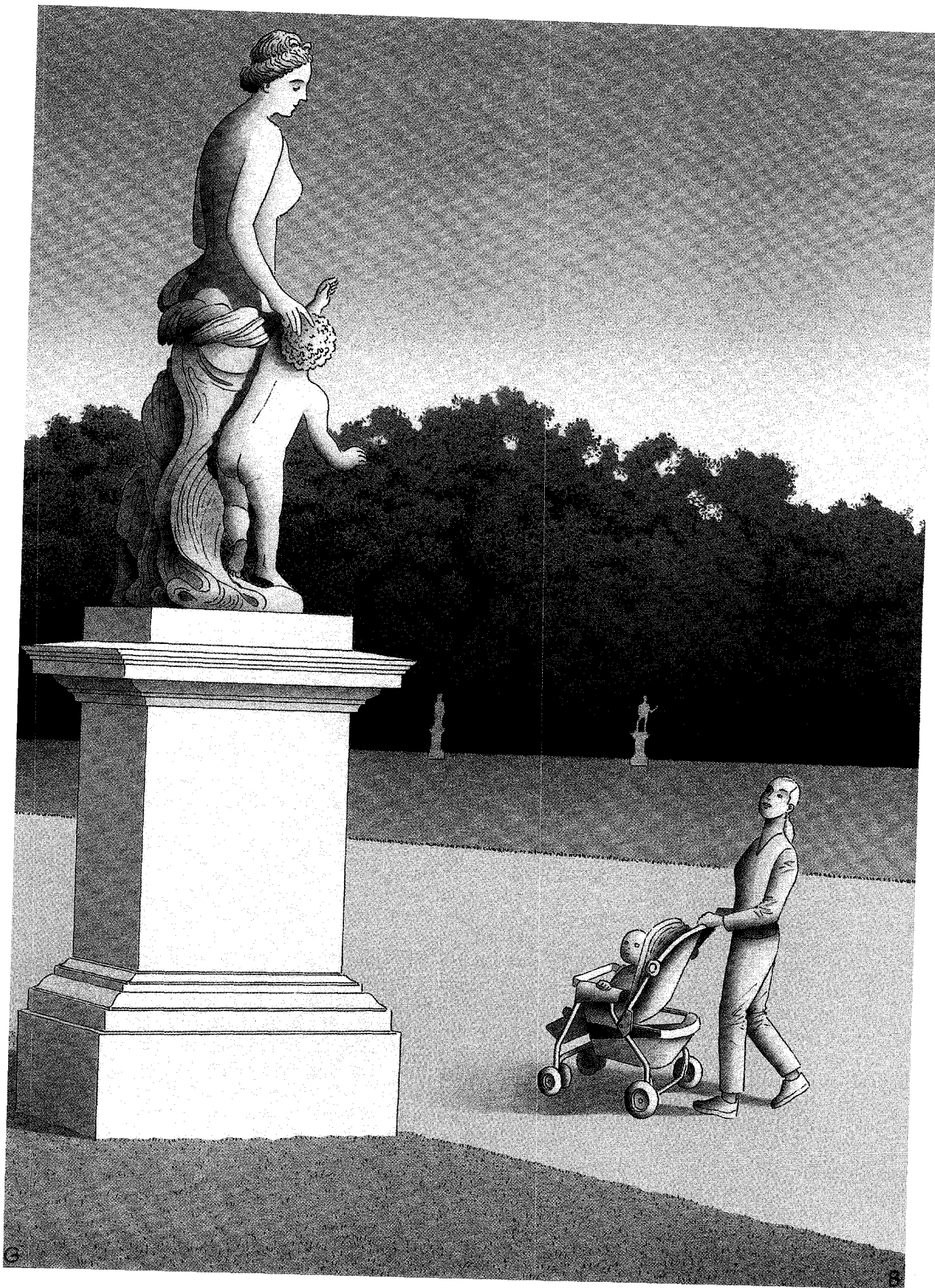
cians have celebrated large fundraisers for years, but discreetly. Names were not publicized, and some campaigns had difficulty calculating the precise number of dollars brought in by a given fundraiser. Bush changed that. Before the 2000 election his campaign instituted a simple system of tracking numbers: any fundraiser who wanted dollars credited to himself could ask donors to write his designated number on their checks. The system ensured exact accounting and signaled that the campaign was closely monitoring how much individual bundlers were bringing in. Meanwhile, the campaign set aggressive goals for bundlers and publicly disclosed which people hit what specific goals. According to several political and fundraising experts, all this has instilled a fervent spirit of competition in Bush’s network that has led it to raise more and more money. Bundlers are also encouraged to identify and “mentor” other potential fundraisers. (One Republican fundraiser described this as an “Amway system” for the rich.)

Not coincidentally, the achievement of specific fundraising goals correlates tightly with a fundraiser’s level of access.

According to Texans for Public Justice, a campaign-finance watchdog group, of the 241 Pioneers in Bush’s 2000 campaign, eighty-seven were named to posts in the Administration. Nineteen became ambassadors, two were named Cabinet officials, one became a federal judge, and at least six (including the Enron executive Ken Lay) were members of the Energy Department transition team. (The correlation of fundraising to access is not new; heavy donors to both parties have long been rewarded with ambassadorships and other plum posts.)

Bush’s aura of political invincibility may have faded somewhat, owing to continued economic struggles and to mounting casualties in Iraq; but the map and these figures attest to his entirely undiminished monetary advantage. Through December, Bush had raised about as much as the entire Democratic field, and with no need to spend on primaries, he is likely to have a significant financial advantage over the eventual Democratic nominee. —DON PECK

Both maps were conceived and researched by Michael Frumin, of Eyebeam Research, for the Web site www.fundrace.org.



THE CASE AGAINST PERFECTION

*What's wrong with designer
children, bionic athletes, and genetic engineering*

BY MICHAEL J. SANDEL

Illustration by Guy Billout

.....

Breakthroughs in genetics present us with a promise and a predicament. The promise is that we may soon be able to treat and prevent a host of debilitating diseases. The predicament is that our newfound genetic knowledge may also enable us to manipulate our own nature—to enhance our muscles, memories, and moods; to choose the sex, height, and other genetic traits of our children; to make ourselves “better than well.” When science moves faster than moral understanding, as it does today, men and women struggle to articulate their unease. In liberal societies they reach first for the language of autonomy, fairness, and individual rights. But this part of our moral vocabulary is ill equipped to address the hardest questions posed by genetic engineering. The genomic revolution has induced a kind of moral vertigo.

Consider cloning. The birth of Dolly the cloned sheep, in 1997, brought a torrent of concern about the prospect of cloned human beings. There are good medical reasons to worry. Most scientists agree that cloning is unsafe, likely to produce offspring with serious abnormalities. (Dolly recently died a premature death.) But suppose technology improved to the point where clones were at no greater risk than naturally conceived offspring. Would human cloning still be objectionable? Should our hesitation be moral as well as medical? What, exactly, is wrong with creating a child who is a genetic twin of one parent, or of an older sibling who has tragically died—or, for that matter, of an admired scientist, sports star, or celebrity?

Some say cloning is wrong because it violates the right to autonomy: by choosing a child's genetic makeup in advance, parents deny the child's right to an open future. A similar

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objection can be raised against any form of bioengineering that allows parents to select or reject genetic characteristics. According to this argument, genetic enhancements for musical talent, say, or athletic prowess, would point children toward particular

choices, and so designer children would never be fully free.

At first glance the autonomy argument seems to capture what is troubling about human cloning and other forms of genetic engineering. It is not persuasive, for two reasons. First, it wrongly implies that absent a designing parent, children are free to choose their characteristics for themselves. But none of us chooses his genetic inheritance. The alternative to a cloned or genetically enhanced child is not one whose future is unbound by particular talents but one at the mercy of the genetic lottery.

Second, even if a concern for autonomy explains some of our worries about made-to-order children, it cannot explain our moral hesitation about people who seek genetic remedies or enhancements for themselves. Gene therapy on somatic (that is, nonreproductive) cells, such as muscle cells and brain cells, repairs or replaces defective genes. The moral quandary arises when people use such therapy not to cure a disease but to reach beyond health, to enhance their physical or cognitive capacities, to lift themselves above the norm.

Like cosmetic surgery, genetic enhancement employs medical means for nonmedical ends—ends unrelated to curing or preventing disease or repairing injury. But unlike cosmetic surgery, genetic enhancement is more than skin-deep. If we are ambivalent about surgery or Botox injections for sagging chins and furrowed brows, we are all the more troubled by genetic engineering for stronger bodies, sharper memories, greater intelligence, and happier moods. The question is whether we are right to be troubled, and if so, on what grounds.

In order to grapple with the ethics of enhancement, we need to confront questions largely lost from view—questions about the moral status of nature, and about the proper stance of human beings toward the given world. Since these questions verge on theology, modern philosophers and political theorists tend to shrink from them. But our new powers of biotechnology make them unavoidable. To see why this is so, consider four examples already on the

horizon: muscle enhancement, memory enhancement, growth-hormone treatment, and reproductive technologies that enable parents to choose the sex and some genetic traits of their children. In each case what began as an attempt to treat a disease or prevent a genetic disorder now beckons as an instrument of improvement and consumer choice.

Muscles. Everyone would welcome a gene therapy to alleviate muscular dystrophy and to reverse the debilitating muscle loss that comes with old age. But what if the same therapy were used to improve athletic performance? Researchers have developed a synthetic gene that, when injected into the muscle cells of mice, prevents and even reverses natural muscle deterioration. The gene not only repairs wasted or injured muscles but also strengthens healthy ones. This success bodes well for human applications. H. Lee Sweeney, of the University of Pennsylvania, who leads the research, hopes his discovery will cure the immobility that afflicts the elderly. But Sweeney's bulked-up mice have already attracted the attention of athletes seeking a competitive edge. Although the therapy is not yet approved for human use, the prospect of genetically enhanced weight lifters, home-run sluggers, linebackers, and sprinters is easy to imagine. The widespread use of steroids and other

of fairness, enhanced genetic differences would be no worse than natural ones, assuming they were safe and made available to all. If genetic enhancement in sports is morally objectionable, it must be for reasons other than fairness.

Memory. Genetic enhancement is possible for brains as well as brawn. In the mid-1990s scientists managed to manipulate a memory-linked gene in fruit flies, creating flies with photographic memories. More recently researchers have produced smart mice by inserting extra copies of a memory-related gene into mouse embryos. The altered mice learn more quickly and remember things longer than normal mice. The extra copies were programmed to remain active even in old age, and the improvement was passed on to offspring.

Human memory is more complicated, but biotech companies, including Memory Pharmaceuticals, are in hot pursuit of memory-enhancing drugs, or "cognition enhancers," for human beings. The obvious market for such drugs consists of those who suffer from Alzheimer's and other serious memory disorders. The companies also have their sights on a bigger market: the 81 million Americans over fifty, who are beginning to encounter the memory loss that comes naturally with age. A drug that reversed age-related memory loss would

be a bonanza for the pharmaceutical industry: a Viagra for the brain. Such use would straddle the line between remedy and enhancement. Unlike a treatment for Alzheimer's, it would cure no disease; but insofar as it restored capacities a person once possessed, it would have a remedial aspect. It could also have purely nonmedical uses: for example, by a lawyer cramming to memorize facts for an upcoming trial, or by a business executive eager to learn Mandarin on the eve of his departure for Shanghai.

Some who worry about the ethics of cognitive enhancement point to the danger of creating two classes of human beings: those with access to enhancement technologies, and those who must make do with their natural capacities. And if the enhancements could be passed down the generations, the two classes might eventually become subspecies—the enhanced and the merely natural. But worry about access ignores the moral status of enhancement itself. Is the scenario troubling because the unenhanced poor would be denied the benefits of bioengineering, or because the enhanced affluent would somehow be dehumanized? As with muscles, so with memory: the fundamental question is not how to ensure equal access to enhancement but whether we should aspire to it in the first place.

Height. Pediatricians already struggle with the ethics of enhancement when confronted by parents who want to make their children taller. Since the 1980s human growth hormone has been approved for children with a hormone deficiency that makes them much shorter than average. But the treatment also increases the height of healthy children.

In order to grapple with the ethics of enhancement, we need to confront questions largely lost from view—questions about the moral status of nature, and about the proper stance of human beings toward the given world.

performance-improving drugs in professional sports suggests that many athletes will be eager to avail themselves of genetic enhancement.

Suppose for the sake of argument that muscle-enhancing gene therapy, unlike steroids, turned out to be safe—or at least no riskier than a rigorous weight-training regimen. Would there be a reason to ban its use in sports? There is something unsettling about the image of genetically altered athletes lifting SUVs or hitting 650-foot home runs or running a three-minute mile. But what, exactly, is troubling about it? Is it simply that we find such superhuman spectacles too bizarre to contemplate? Or does our unease point to something of ethical significance?

It might be argued that a genetically enhanced athlete, like a drug-enhanced athlete, would have an unfair advantage over his unenhanced competitors. But the fairness argument against enhancement has a fatal flaw: it has always been the case that some athletes are better endowed genetically than others, and yet we do not consider this to undermine the fairness of competitive sports. From the standpoint

Some parents of healthy children who are unhappy with their stature (typically boys) ask why it should make a difference whether a child is short because of a hormone deficiency or because his parents happen to be short. Whatever the cause, the social consequences are the same.

In the face of this argument some doctors began prescribing hormone treatments for children whose short stature was unrelated to any medical problem. By 1996 such “off-label” use accounted for 40 percent of human-growth-hormone prescriptions. Although it is legal to prescribe drugs for purposes not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, pharmaceutical companies cannot promote such use. Seeking to expand its market, Eli Lilly & Co. recently persuaded the FDA to approve its human growth hormone for healthy children whose projected adult height is in the bottom one percentile—under five feet three inches for boys and four feet eleven inches for girls. This concession raises a large question about the ethics of enhancement: If hormone treatments need not be limited to those with hormone deficiencies, why should they be available only to very short children? Why shouldn’t all shorter-than-average children be able to seek treatment? And what about a child of average height who wants to be taller so that he can make the basketball team?

Some oppose height enhancement on the grounds that it is collectively self-defeating; as some become taller, others become shorter relative to the norm. Except in Lake Wobegon, not every child can be above average. As the unenhanced began to feel shorter, they, too, might seek treatment, leading to a hormonal arms race that left everyone worse off, especially those who couldn’t afford to buy their way up from shortness.

But the arms-race objection is not decisive on its own. Like the fairness objection to bioengineered muscles and memory, it leaves unexamined the attitudes and dispositions that prompt the drive for enhancement. If we were bothered only by the injustice of adding shortness to the problems of the poor, we could remedy that unfairness by publicly subsidizing height enhancements. As for the relative height deprivation suffered by innocent bystanders, we could compensate them by taxing those who buy their way to greater height. The real question is whether we want to live in a society where parents feel compelled to spend a fortune to make perfectly healthy kids a few inches taller.

Sex selection. Perhaps the most inevitable nonmedical use of bioengineering is sex selection. For centuries parents have been trying to choose the sex of their children. Today biotech succeeds where folk remedies failed.

One technique for sex selection arose with prenatal tests using amniocentesis and ultrasound. These medical technologies were developed to detect genetic abnormalities such as spina bifida and Down syndrome. But they can also reveal the sex of the fetus—allowing for the abortion of a fetus of an undesired sex. Even among those who favor

abortion rights, few advocate abortion simply because the parents do not want a girl. Nevertheless, in traditional societies with a powerful cultural preference for boys, this practice has become widespread.

Sex selection need not involve abortion, however. For couples undergoing *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), it is possible to choose the sex of the child before the fertilized egg is implanted in the womb. One method makes use of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), a procedure developed to screen for genetic diseases. Several eggs are fertilized in a petri dish and grown to the eight-cell stage (about three days). At that point the embryos are tested to determine their sex. Those of the desired sex are implanted; the others are typically discarded. Although few couples are likely to undergo the difficulty and expense of IVF simply to choose the sex of their child, embryo screening is a highly reliable means of sex selection. And as our genetic knowledge increases, it may be possible to use PGD to cull embryos carrying undesired genes, such as those associated with obesity, height, and skin color. The science-fiction movie *Gattaca* depicts a future in which parents routinely screen embryos for sex, height, immunity to disease, and even IQ. There is something troubling about the *Gattaca* scenario, but it is not easy to identify what exactly is wrong with screening embryos to choose the sex of our children.

One line of objection draws on arguments familiar from the abortion debate. Those who believe that an embryo is a person reject embryo screening for the same reasons they reject abortion. If an eight-cell embryo growing in a petri dish is morally equivalent to a fully developed human being, then discarding it is no better than aborting a fetus, and both practices are equivalent to infanticide. Whatever its merits, however, this “pro-life” objection is not an argument against sex selection as such.

The latest technology poses the question of sex selection unclouded by the matter of an embryo’s moral status. The Genetics & IVF Institute, a for-profit infertility clinic in Fairfax, Virginia, now offers a sperm-sorting technique that makes it possible to choose the sex of one’s child before it is conceived. X-bearing sperm, which produce girls, carry more DNA than Y-bearing sperm, which produce boys; a device called a flow cytometer can separate them. The process, called MicroSort, has a high rate of success.

If sex selection by sperm sorting is objectionable, it must be for reasons that go beyond the debate about the moral status of the embryo. One such reason is that sex selection is an instrument of sex discrimination—typically against girls, as illustrated by the chilling sex ratios in India and China. Some speculate that societies with substantially more men than women will be less stable, more violent, and more prone to crime or war. These are legitimate worries—but the sperm-sorting company has a clever way of addressing them. It offers MicroSort only to couples who want to choose the sex of a child for purposes of “family balancing.” Those with

more sons than daughters may choose a girl, and vice versa. But customers may not use the technology to stock up on children of the same sex, or even to choose the sex of their firstborn child. (So far the majority of MicroSort clients have chosen girls.) Under restrictions of this kind, do any ethical issues remain that should give us pause?

The case of MicroSort helps us isolate the moral objections that would persist if muscle-enhancement, memory-enhancement, and height-enhancement technologies were safe and available to all.

It is commonly said that genetic enhancements undermine our humanity by threatening our capacity to act freely, to succeed by our own efforts, and to consider ourselves responsible—worthy of praise or blame—for the things we do and for the way we are. It is one thing to hit seventy home runs as the result of disciplined training and effort, and something else, something less, to hit them with the help of steroids or genetically enhanced muscles. Of course, the roles of effort and enhancement will be a matter of degree. But as the role of enhancement increases, our admiration for the achievement fades—or, rather, our admiration for

the achievement shifts from the player to his pharmacist. This suggests that our moral response to enhancement is a response to the diminished agency of the person whose achievement is enhanced.

Though there is much to be said for this argument, I do not think the main problem with enhancement and genetic engineering is that they undermine effort and erode human agency. The deeper danger is that they represent a kind of hyperagency—a Promethean aspiration to remake nature, including human nature, to serve our purposes and satisfy our desires. The problem is not the drift to mechanism but the drive to mastery. And what the drive to mastery misses and may even destroy is an appreciation of the gifted character of human powers and achievements.

To acknowledge the giftedness of life is to recognize that our talents and powers are not wholly our own doing, despite the effort we expend to develop and to exercise them. It is also to recognize that not everything in the world is open to whatever use we may desire or devise. Appreciating the gifted quality of life constrains the Promethean project and conduces to a certain humility. It is in part a religious sensibility. But its resonance reaches beyond religion.

HOUSE

I lie in a bedroom in a house
that was built in 1862, we were told—
the two windows still facing east
into the bright daily reveille of the sun.

The early birds are chirping,
and I think of those who have slept here before,
the family we bought the house from—
the five Hendersons—

and the engineer they told us about
who lived here alone before them,
the one who built onto the back
of the house a large glassy room with wood beams.

I have an old photograph of the house
in black and white, a few small trees,
and a curved dirt driveway,
but I do not know who lived here then.

So I go back to the Civil War
and to the farmer who built the house
and the rough stone walls
that encompass the house and run up into the woods,

he who mounted his thin wife in this room,
while the war raged to the south,
with the strength of a dairyman
or with the tenderness of a dairyman

or with both, alternating back and forth
so as to give his wife much pleasure
and possibly to call a son down to earth
to help with the cows and take over the little farm

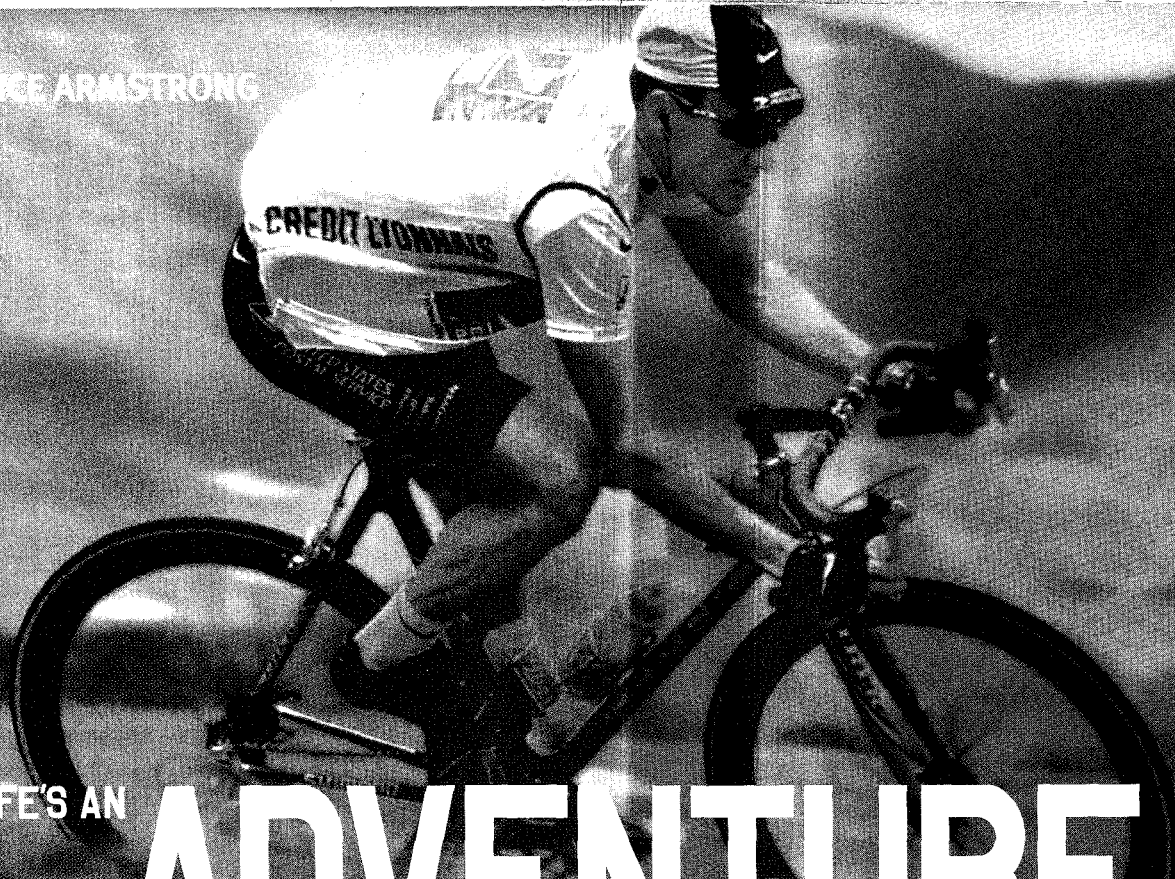
when he no longer had the strength
after all the days and nights of toil and prayer—
the sun breaking over the horizon
and into these same windows

to light the same bed-space where I lie
with nothing to farm,
the dead farmer and his dead wife for company,
feeling better and worse by turns.

—BILLY COLLINS

*Billy Collins was the U.S. poet laureate
from 2001 to 2003. His most recent books are *Sailing
Alone Around the Room* (2001) and *Nine Horses* (2003).*

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It is difficult to account for what we admire about human activity and achievement without drawing upon some version of this idea. Consider two types of athletic achievement. We appreciate players like Pete Rose, who are not blessed with great natural gifts but who manage, through striving, grit, and determination, to excel in their sport. But we also admire players like Joe DiMaggio, who display natural gifts with grace and effortlessness. Now, suppose we learned that both players took performance-enhancing drugs. Whose turn to drugs would we find more deeply disillusioning? Which aspect of the athletic ideal—effort or gift—would be more deeply offended?

Some might say effort: the problem with drugs is that they provide a shortcut, a way to win without striving. But striving is not the point of sports; excellence is. And excellence consists at least partly in the display of natural talents and gifts that are no doing of the athlete who possesses them. This is an uncomfortable fact for democratic societies. We want to believe that success, in sports and in life, is something we earn, not something we inherit. Natural gifts, and the admiration they inspire, embarrass the meritocratic faith; they cast doubt on the conviction that praise and rewards flow from effort alone. In the face of this embarrassment we inflate the moral significance of striving, and depreciate giftedness. This distortion can be seen, for example, in network-television coverage of the Olympics,

which focuses less on the feats the athletes perform than on heartrending stories of the hardships they have overcome and the struggles they have waged to triumph over an injury or a difficult upbringing or political turmoil in their native land.

But effort isn't everything. No one believes that a mediocre basketball player who works and trains even harder than Michael Jordan deserves greater acclaim or a bigger contract. The real problem with genetically altered athletes is that they corrupt athletic competition as a human activity that honors the cultivation and display of natural talents. From this standpoint, enhancement can be seen as the ultimate expression of the ethic of effort and willfulness—a kind of high-tech striving. The ethic of willfulness and the biotechnological powers it now enlists are arrayed against the claims of giftedness.

The ethic of giftedness, under siege in sports, persists in the practice of parenting. But here, too, bioengineering and genetic enhancement threaten to dislodge it. To appreciate children as gifts is to accept them as they come, not as objects of our design or products of our will or instruments of our ambition. Parental love is not contingent on the talents and attributes a child happens to have. We choose our friends and spouses at least partly on the basis of qualities we find attractive. But we do not choose

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our children. Their qualities are unpredictable, and even the most conscientious parents cannot be held wholly responsible for the kind of children they have. That is why parenthood, more than other human relationships, teaches what the theologian William F. May calls an "openness to the unbidden."

May's resonant phrase helps us see that the deepest moral objection to enhancement lies less in the perfection it seeks than in the human disposition it expresses and promotes. The problem is not that parents usurp the autonomy of a child they design. The problem lies in the hubris of the designing parents, in their drive to master the mystery of birth. Even if this disposition did not make parents tyrants to their children, it would disfigure the relation between parent and child, and deprive the parent of the humility and enlarged human sympathies that an openness to the unbidden can cultivate.

To appreciate children as gifts or blessings is not, of course, to be passive in the face of illness or disease. Medical intervention to cure or prevent illness or restore the injured to health does not desecrate nature but honors it. Healing sickness or injury does not override a child's natural capacities but permits them to flourish.

Nor does the sense of life as a gift mean that parents must shrink from shaping and directing the development of their child. Just as athletes and artists have an obligation to cultivate their talents, so parents have an obligation to

cultivate their children, to help them discover and develop their talents and gifts. As May points out, parents give their children two kinds of love: accepting love and transforming love. Accepting love affirms the being of the child, whereas transforming love seeks the well-being of the child. Each aspect corrects the excesses of the other, he writes: "Attachment becomes too quietistic if it slackens into mere acceptance of the child as he is." Parents have a duty to promote their children's excellence.

These days, however, overly ambitious parents are prone to get carried away with transforming love—promoting and demanding all manner of accomplishments from their children, seeking perfection. "Parents find it difficult to maintain an equilibrium between the two sides of love," May observes. "Accepting love, without transforming love, slides into indulgence and finally neglect. Transforming love, without accepting love, badgers and finally rejects." May finds in these competing impulses a parallel with modern science: it, too, engages us in beholding the given world, studying and savoring it, and also in molding the world, transforming and perfecting it.

The mandate to mold our children, to cultivate and improve them, complicates the case against enhancement. We usually admire parents who seek the best for their children, who spare no effort to help them achieve happiness and success. Some parents confer advantages on their children by

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enrolling them in expensive schools, hiring private tutors, sending them to tennis camp, providing them with piano lessons, ballet lessons, swimming lessons, SAT-prep courses, and so on. If it is permissible and even admirable for parents to help their children in these ways, why isn't it equally admirable for parents to use whatever genetic technologies may emerge (provided they are safe) to enhance their children's intelligence, musical ability, or athletic prowess?

The defenders of enhancement are right to this extent: improving children through genetic engineering is similar in spirit to the heavily managed, high-pressure child-rearing that is now common. But this similarity does not

Improving children through genetic engineering is similar in spirit to the heavily managed child-rearing that is now common. But this similarity does not vindicate genetic enhancement. On the contrary, it highlights a problem with the trend toward hyperparenting.

vindicate genetic enhancement. On the contrary, it highlights a problem with the trend toward hyperparenting. One conspicuous example of this trend is sports-crazed parents bent on making champions of their children. Another is the frenzied drive of overbearing parents to mold and manage their children's academic careers.

As the pressure for performance increases, so does the need to help distractible children concentrate on the task at hand. This may be why diagnoses of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder have increased so sharply. Lawrence Diller, a pediatrician and the author of *Running on Ritalin*, estimates that five to six percent of American children under eighteen (a total of four to five million kids) are currently prescribed Ritalin, Adderall, and other stimulants, the treatment of choice for ADHD. (Stimulants counteract hyperactivity by making it easier to focus and sustain attention.) The number of Ritalin prescriptions for children and adolescents has tripled over the past decade, but not all users suffer from attention disorders or hyperactivity. High school and college students have learned that prescription stimulants improve concentration for those with normal attention spans, and some buy or borrow their classmates' drugs to enhance their performance on the SAT or other exams. Since stimulants work for both medical and nonmedical purposes, they raise the same moral questions posed by other technologies of enhancement.

However those questions are resolved, the debate reveals the cultural distance we have traveled since the debate over marijuana, LSD, and other drugs a generation ago. Unlike the drugs of the 1960s and 1970s, Ritalin and Adderall are

not for checking out but for buckling down, not for beholding the world and taking it in but for molding the world and fitting in. We used to speak of nonmedical drug use as "recreational." That term no longer applies. The steroids and stimulants that figure in the enhancement debate are not a source of recreation but a bid for compliance—a way of answering a competitive society's demand to improve our performance and perfect our nature. This demand for performance and perfection animates the impulse to rail against the given. It is the deepest source of the moral trouble with enhancement.

Some see a clear line between genetic enhancement and other ways that people seek improvement in their children and themselves. Genetic manipulation seems somehow worse—more intrusive, more sinister—than other ways of enhancing performance and seeking success. But morally speaking, the difference is less significant than it seems. Bioengineering gives us reason to question the low-tech, high-pressure child-rearing practices we commonly accept. The hyperparenting familiar in our time represents an anxious excess of mastery and dominion that misses the sense of life as a gift. This draws it disturbingly close to eugenics.

The shadow of eugenics hangs over today's debates about genetic engineering and enhancement. Critics of genetic engineering argue that human cloning, enhancement, and the quest for designer children are nothing more than "privatized" or "free-market" eugenics. Defenders of enhancement reply that genetic choices freely made are not really eugenic—at least not in the pejorative sense. To remove the coercion, they argue, is to remove the very thing that makes eugenic policies repugnant.

Sorting out the lesson of eugenics is another way of wrestling with the ethics of enhancement. The Nazis gave eugenics a bad name. But what, precisely, was wrong with it? Was the old eugenics objectionable only insofar as it was coercive? Or is there something inherently wrong with the resolve to deliberately design our progeny's traits?

James Watson, the biologist who, with Francis Crick, discovered the structure of DNA, sees nothing wrong with genetic engineering and enhancement, provided they are freely chosen rather than state-imposed. And yet Watson's language contains more than a whiff of the old eugenic sensibility. "If you really are stupid, I would call that a disease," he recently told *The Times* of London. "The lower 10 percent who really have difficulty, even in elementary school, what's the cause of it? A lot of people would like to say, 'Well, poverty, things like that.' It probably isn't. So I'd like to get rid of that, to help the lower 10 percent." A few years ago Watson stirred controversy by saying that if a gene for homosexuality were discovered, a woman should be free to abort a fetus that carried it. When his remark provoked an uproar, he replied that he was not singling out

gays but asserting a principle: women should be free to abort fetuses for any reason of genetic preference—for example, if the child would be dyslexic, or lacking musical talent, or too short to play basketball.

Watson's scenarios are clearly objectionable to those for whom all abortion is an unspeakable crime. But for those who do not subscribe to the pro-life position, these scenarios raise a hard question: If it is morally troubling to contemplate abortion to avoid a gay child or a dyslexic one, doesn't this suggest that something is wrong with acting on any eugenic preference, even when no state coercion is involved?

Consider the market in eggs and sperm. The advent of artificial insemination allows prospective parents to shop for gametes with the genetic traits they desire in their offspring. It is a less predictable way to design children than cloning or pre-implantation genetic screening, but it offers a good example of a procreative practice in which the old eugenics meets the new consumerism. A few years ago some Ivy League newspapers ran an ad seeking an egg from a woman who was at least five feet ten inches tall and athletic, had no major family medical problems, and had a combined SAT score of 1400 or above. The ad offered \$50,000 for an egg from a donor with these traits. More recently a Web site was launched claiming to auction eggs from fashion models whose photos appeared on the site, at starting bids of \$15,000 to \$150,000.

On what grounds, if any, is the egg market morally objectionable? Since no one is forced to buy or sell, it cannot be wrong for reasons of coercion. Some might worry that hefty prices would exploit poor women by presenting them with an offer they couldn't refuse. But the designer eggs that fetch the highest prices are likely to be sought from the privileged, not the poor. If the market for premium eggs gives us moral qualms, this, too, shows that concerns about eugenics are not put to rest by freedom of choice.

A tale of two sperm banks helps explain why. The Repository for Germinal Choice, one of America's first sperm banks, was not a commercial enterprise. It was opened in 1980 by Robert Graham, a philanthropist dedicated to improving the world's "germ plasm" and counteracting the rise of "retrograde humans." His plan was to collect the sperm of Nobel Prize-winning scientists and make it available to women of high intelligence, in hopes of breeding super-smart babies. But Graham had trouble persuading Nobel laureates to donate their sperm for his bizarre scheme, and so settled for sperm from young scientists of high promise. His sperm bank closed in 1999.

In contrast, California Cryobank, one of the world's leading sperm banks, is a for-profit company with no overt eugenic mission. Cappy Rothman, M.D., a co-founder

of the firm, has nothing but disdain for Graham's eugenics, although the standards Cryobank imposes on the sperm it recruits are exacting. Cryobank has offices in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between Harvard and MIT, and in Palo Alto, California, near Stanford. It advertises for donors in campus newspapers (compensation up to \$900 a month), and accepts less than five percent of the men who apply. Cryobank's marketing materials play up the prestigious source of its sperm. Its catalogue provides detailed information about the physical characteristics of each donor, along with his ethnic origin and college major. For an extra fee prospective customers can buy the results of a test that assesses the donor's temperament and character type. Rothman reports that Cryobank's ideal sperm donor is six feet tall, with brown eyes, blond hair, and dimples, and has a college degree—not because the company wants to propagate those traits, but because those are the traits his customers want: "If our customers wanted high school dropouts, we would give them high school dropouts."

Not everyone objects to marketing sperm. But anyone who is troubled by the eugenic aspect of the Nobel Prize sperm bank should be equally troubled by Cryobank, consumer-driven though it be. What, after all, is the moral difference between designing children according to an explicit eugenic purpose and designing children according to the dictates of the market? Whether the aim is to improve

Eugenics and genetic engineering represent the one-sided triumph of willfulness over giftedness, of dominion over reverence, of molding over beholding.

humanity's "germ plasm" or to cater to consumer preferences, both practices are eugenic insofar as both make children into products of deliberate design.

A number of political philosophers call for a new "liberal eugenics." They argue that a moral distinction can be drawn between the old eugenic policies and genetic enhancements that do not restrict the autonomy of the child. "While old-fashioned authoritarian eugenicists sought to produce citizens out of a single centrally designed mould," writes Nicholas Agar, "the distinguishing mark of the new liberal eugenics is state neutrality." Government may not tell parents what sort of children to design, and parents may engineer in their children only those traits that improve their capacities without biasing their choice of life plans. A recent text on genetics and justice, written by the bioethicists Allen Buchanan, Dan W. Brock, Norman Daniels, and Daniel Wikler, offers a similar view. The "bad reputation of eugenics," they write, is due to practices that "might be avoidable in a future eugenic program." The problem with the old eugenics was that its burdens fell disproportionately on the weak and the poor,

who were unjustly sterilized and segregated. But provided that the benefits and burdens of genetic improvement are fairly distributed, these bioethicists argue, eugenic measures are unobjectionable and may even be morally required.

The libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick proposed a "genetic supermarket" that would enable parents to order children by design without imposing a single design on the society as a whole: "This supermarket system has the great virtue that it involves no centralized decision fixing the future human type(s)."

Even the leading philosopher of American liberalism, John Rawls, in his classic *A Theory of Justice* (1971), offered a brief endorsement of noncoercive eugenics. Even in a society that agrees to share the benefits and burdens of the genetic lottery, it is "in the interest of each to have greater

In a social world that prizes mastery and control, parenthood is a school for humility. That we care deeply about our children and yet cannot choose the kind we want teaches parents to be open to the unbidden.

natural assets," Rawls wrote. "This enables him to pursue a preferred plan of life." The parties to the social contract "want to insure for their descendants the best genetic endowment (assuming their own to be fixed)." Eugenic policies are therefore not only permissible but required as a matter of justice. "Thus over time a society is to take steps at least to preserve the general level of natural abilities and to prevent the diffusion of serious defects."

But removing the coercion does not vindicate eugenics. The problem with eugenics and genetic engineering is that they represent the one-sided triumph of willfulness over giftedness, of dominion over reverence, of molding over beholding. Why, we may wonder, should we worry about this triumph? Why not shake off our unease about genetic enhancement as so much superstition? What would be lost if biotechnology dissolved our sense of giftedness?

From a religious standpoint the answer is clear: To believe that our talents and powers are wholly our own doing is to misunderstand our place in creation, to confuse our role with God's. Religion is not the only source of reasons to care about giftedness, however. The moral stakes can also be described in secular terms. If bioengineering made the myth of the "self-made man" come true, it would be difficult to view our talents as gifts for which we are indebted, rather than as achievements for which we are responsible. This would transform three key features of our moral landscape: humility, responsibility, and solidarity.

In a social world that prizes mastery and control, parenthood is a school for humility. That we care deeply about our children and yet cannot choose the kind we want teaches parents to be open to the unbidden. Such openness is a disposition worth affirming, not only within families but in the wider world as well. It invites us to abide the unexpected, to live with dissonance, to rein in the impulse to control. A *Gattaca*-like world in which parents became accustomed to specifying the sex and genetic traits of their children would be a world inhospitable to the unbidden, a gated community writ large. The awareness that our talents and abilities are not wholly our own doing restrains our tendency toward hubris.

Though some maintain that genetic enhancement erodes human agency by overriding effort, the real problem is the explosion, not the erosion, of responsibility. As humility gives way, responsibility expands to daunting proportions. We attribute less to chance and more to choice. Parents become responsible for choosing, or failing to choose, the right traits for their children. Athletes become responsible for acquiring, or failing to acquire, the talents that will help their teams win.

One of the blessings of seeing ourselves as creatures of nature, God, or fortune is that we are not wholly responsible for the way we are. The more we become masters of our genetic endowments, the greater the burden we bear for the talents we have and the way we perform. Today when a basketball player misses a rebound, his coach can blame him for being out of position. Tomorrow the coach may blame him for being too short. Even now the use of performance-enhancing drugs in professional sports is subtly transforming the expectations players have for one another; on some teams players who take the field free from amphetamines or other stimulants are criticized for "playing naked."

The more alive we are to the chanced nature of our lot, the more reason we have to share our fate with others. Consider insurance. Since people do not know whether or when various ills will befall them, they pool their risk by buying health insurance and life insurance. As life plays itself out, the healthy wind up subsidizing the unhealthy, and those who live to a ripe old age wind up subsidizing the families of those who die before their time. Even without a sense of mutual obligation, people pool their risks and resources and share one another's fate.

But insurance markets mimic solidarity only insofar as people do not know or control their own risk factors. Suppose genetic testing advanced to the point where it could reliably predict each person's medical future and life expectancy. Those confident of good health and long life would opt out of the pool, causing other people's premiums to skyrocket. The solidarity of insurance would disappear as those with good genes fled the actuarial company of those with bad ones.

The fear that insurance companies would use genetic

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data to assess risks and set premiums recently led the Senate to vote to prohibit genetic discrimination in health insurance. But the bigger danger, admittedly more speculative, is that genetic enhancement, if routinely practiced, would make it harder to foster the moral sentiments that social solidarity requires.

Why, after all, do the successful owe anything to the least-advantaged members of society? The best answer to this question leans heavily on the notion of giftedness. The natural talents that enable the successful to flourish are not their own doing but, rather, their good fortune—a result of the genetic lottery. If our genetic endowments are gifts, rather than achievements for which we can claim credit, it is a mistake and a conceit to assume that we are entitled to the full measure of the bounty they reap in a market economy. We therefore have an obligation to share this bounty with those who, through no fault of their own, lack comparable gifts.

A lively sense of the contingency of our gifts—a consciousness that none of us is wholly responsible for his or her success—saves a meritocratic society from sliding into

One of the blessings of seeing ourselves as creatures of nature, God, or fortune is that we are not wholly responsible for the way we are. The more alive we are to the chanced nature of our lot, the more reason we have to share our fate with others. Genetic enhancement would make it harder to foster the moral sentiments that social solidarity requires.

the smug assumption that the rich are rich because they are more deserving than the poor. Without this, the successful would become even more likely than they are now to view themselves as self-made and self-sufficient, and hence wholly responsible for their success. Those at the bottom of society would be viewed not as disadvantaged, and thus worthy of a measure of compensation, but as simply unfit, and thus worthy of eugenic repair. The meritocracy, less chastened by chance, would become harder, less forgiving. As perfect genetic knowledge would end the simulacrum of solidarity in insurance markets, so perfect genetic control would erode the actual solidarity that arises when men and women reflect on the contingency of their talents and fortunes.

Thirty-five years ago Robert L. Sinsheimer, a molecular biologist at the California Institute of Technology, glimpsed the shape of things to come. In an article titled “The Prospect of Designed Genetic Change” he argued that freedom of choice would vindi-

cate the new genetics, and set it apart from the discredited eugenics of old.

To implement the older eugenics ... would have required a massive social programme carried out over many generations. Such a programme could not have been initiated without the consent and co-operation of a major fraction of the population, and would have been continuously subject to social control. In contrast, the new eugenics could, at least in principle, be implemented on a quite individual basis, in one generation, and subject to no existing restrictions.

According to Sinsheimer, the new eugenics would be voluntary rather than coerced, and also more humane. Rather than segregating and eliminating the unfit, it would improve them. “The old eugenics would have required a continual selection for breeding of the fit, and a culling of the unfit,” he wrote. “The new eugenics would permit in principle the conversion of all the unfit to the highest genetic level.”

Sinsheimer’s paean to genetic engineering caught the heady, Promethean self-image of the age. He wrote hopefully of rescuing “the losers in that chromosomal lottery that so firmly channels our human destinies,” including not only those born with genetic defects but also “the 50,000,000 ‘normal’ Americans with an IQ of less than 90.” But he also saw that something bigger than improving on nature’s “mindless, age-old throw of dice” was at stake. Implicit in technologies of genetic intervention was a more exalted place for human beings in the cosmos. “As we enlarge man’s freedom, we diminish his constraints and that which he must accept as given,” he wrote. Copernicus and Darwin had “demoted man from his bright glory at the focal point of the universe,” but the new biology would restore his central role. In the mirror of our genetic

knowledge we would see ourselves as more than a link in the chain of evolution: “We can be the agent of transition to a whole new pitch of evolution. This is a cosmic event.”

There is something appealing, even intoxicating, about a vision of human freedom unfettered by the given. It may even be the case that the allure of that vision played a part in summoning the genomic age into being. It is often assumed that the powers of enhancement we now possess arose as an inadvertent by-product of biomedical progress—the genetic revolution came, so to speak, to cure disease, and stayed to tempt us with the prospect of enhancing our performance, designing our children, and perfecting our nature. That may have the story backwards. It is more plausible to view genetic engineering as the ultimate expression of our resolve to see ourselves astride the world, the masters of our nature. But that promise of mastery is flawed. It threatens to banish our appreciation of life as a gift, and to leave us with nothing to affirm or behold outside our own will. ■

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THE ENTHUSIASTS

A report from deep in the grass roots

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

.....

I'm fascinated by political enthusiasm. To me, selecting my democratic representative is a lugubrious duty, more like making a will than cheering the Bruins. For months this past fall and winter signs of enthusiasm for Howard Dean—yard signs of it, anyway—were all over south-central New Hampshire, where I live. In the weeks before the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary I talked to Dean campaign staffers and to Dean campaign volunteers. I attended a spate of Dean “house parties” in my town. I’ll call the town “Quaintford.” (I’ve changed everybody’s name. I have to live here.)

As John Kerry’s victory would show, there were plenty of Kerry voters in New Hampshire. But I encountered no Kerry votaries. My neighbors who were partial to Wesley Clark were measured in their partiality. Although John Edwards was held in high esteem, only the most ardent admirers of his “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” favored him at the polls. I could have gone to see the avid New Hampshire Lieberman partisans, but I didn’t want to disturb Joe and Hadassah at home, in the apartment they’d rented in Manchester. Nuns on snowboards were more common than Al Sharpton boosters. My object was to understand political fervor, as opposed to politics, and it was the advocacy for Howard Dean that was best characterized by the word “enthusiasm.”

It’s a slightly creepy word, with its Greek root meaning “the fact of being possessed by a god.” But other than a Herculean neck, Howard Dean didn’t appear to have mythic attributes. Nor did his supporters appear to think he did. I heard a Quaintford volunteer lament the candidate’s need to be simultaneously in Iowa and New Hampshire. A second volunteer, a tired-looking veteran of Democratic campaigns in a state where Democrats are outnumbered by independents, Republicans, and, probably, moose, said, rolling his eyes, “Maybe he’ll be in both places at the same time.” “And,” said a third volunteer, “walking on water to get there.”

Perhaps the issues were the inspiration. At one house party Lewis, a smiling, serious young

campaign worker who came to all the Quaintford events, said to the committed and the prospective Dean supporters, “I think we would all broadly agree on a set of issues.” As *cris de coeur* go, this is on the mild side.

If not the man or the ideas, then what? Margaret, a college senior, volunteering at Dean’s headquarters in Manchester, said, “It’s the campaign that’s such a phenomenal experience.”

The headquarters, in an old mill building, was a loft space, ample enough for Claes Oldenburg to work in. The walls were bare brick. The floors were refinished. The heating ductwork was modishly exposed on the distant ceilings. The loft contained numerous computers; several large, friendly dogs; and a lot of people of about the same age.

“This is way better than the beach for me,” said Margaret, who was giving up her Christmas vacation. She said, “Just the campaign—not even Dean winning—has given a lot of people the opportunity to talk about our country.” She said, “The way our campaign is run is so positive. We’re all in it together.”

Robert, a fellow student volunteer, said, “We’re the fuel for the fire.”

“I was always interested,” Margaret said, “not necessarily in politics, but in people who can make changes.”

“Dean is a change agent,” Robert said.

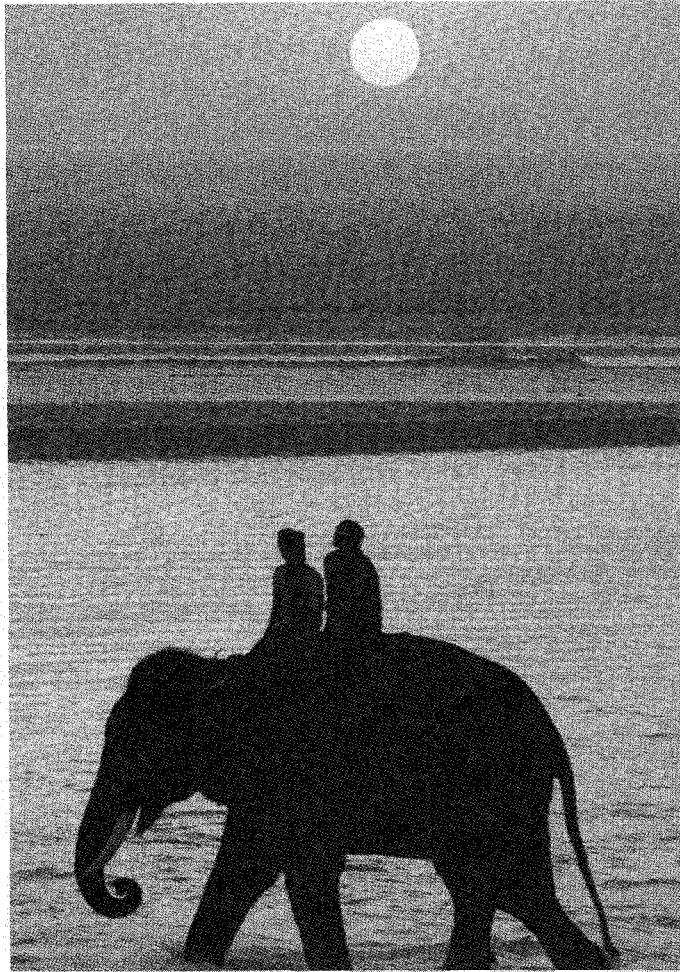
“Change” has a warm, vernal sound at age twenty-two. Then comes a day when all the word brings to mind is “any change in a wart or mole ...”

Connie became a Dean volunteer after Dean’s first Quaintford campaign appearance. “He was pissed off,” she said. “And so am I.” Connie had an old-fashioned-cool North Beach look but belonged to the generation of the Go-Go’s and “We Got the Beat,” not the

Beats and John Clellon Holmes’s *Go*. “What’s wrong with being angry?” she asked. “People listened. Young people listened. People,” she said, changing the emphasis on the word to indicate a shift from admiration for the masses to exaspera-

P. J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His book Peace Kills, a survey of post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy, will be published this spring.

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tion with the general public, “want this cardboard cutout ...”

Connie’s house was old and cute, but not cutely decorated. The style was retro-modernism, a second wind of what the up-to-date favored forty years ago. And at Connie’s house party, in the mix of guacamole, hummus, Swedish meatballs, earnest conversation, and good domestic wine, there was something else of a lost world of once new ideas.

Lewis, the campaign worker, was just out of graduate school with a degree in political science. He talked about how house parties were pioneered by organizers for the United Farm Workers in California.

People introduced themselves or, mostly, introduced their politics.

Helen was involved with theater. She said, “I shudder to think of Bush in the White House for the next four years and want to see who’s best to run against him and beat him.”

Jessica was from one of the depressed industrial cities near Boston. She was concerned about depressed industrial cities.

Connie said, “I’m at the house party because it’s my house,” and giggled.

Drew said, “It’s my house too. I’m involved because of Connie.” Drew was a musician.

Charles, a visiting artist at a local arts center, said, “After three years of experiencing what I consider a very radical agenda by the Bush Administration, I feel I should get involved in politics.”

Alice was leaning toward Dean but undecided. She sighed. She said, “I never vote with the majority.”

Lewis said, “If you voted for Gore, you did.”

“Connie and I,” Alice said, “went to college together. *Everybody* voted for John Anderson. When he lost we were amazed.”

Lewis played a video about the Dean campaign. On the television Dean said, “I want more than your vote—I want you.” Dean said, “Take America back for ordinary people.” Dean said, “The biggest loss since this President took office is our sense of community, that we’re all in it together.” Dean spoke with a composed solemnity, like a doctor telling you that you have six months to live.

Alice lauded the inclusiveness lauded in the Dean video. “Clark didn’t have that. I’d like to help more.”

“This is *not* about peer pressure,” Lewis said. Connie laughed.

Helen said, “That video was not for me. It was all about the campaign structure ... I want to know who’s going to beat George Bush. Wes Clark is *slick*. Dean came across as a wet fish on that video.”

“Clark was a Republican until September,” said Connie. “That says to me somebody put the buzz in his ear: ‘You could run for President.’ Howard Dean did it because he had something to say.” Connie said that until now she had always voted for the primary candidate she thought was going to win against the Republicans. Then she saw Dean

speak in Quaintford. “His suit jacket was tucked into his belt. He was so focused that he didn’t care about being slick. I commend him for messing up ... I’m tired of voting for people just because they might win. I’m really putting my heart into this.”

Charles argued—although not with anyone—that Dean had the campaign structure necessary to win, plus he had the money.

Helen said, “He’s also a good guy, huh? Are you going to say he’s a good guy? I’m not going to vote for him because he has the money.”

Charles went off on a tangent: “We don’t have a democracy right now. We never have. We’re still an experiment. America has a class system ... It’s run by the wealthy ... Clark is a protégé of the Democratic Leadership Council.”

Lewis turned to Helen. “Dean has an amazing record of accomplishments,” he said. “Expanded health care, conserved four hundred thousand acres of land, balanced budgets. But my involvement comes from ...” Lewis turned back toward the room. He told the guests that he’d grown up in Washington, D.C., in modest circumstances, “raised on Joni Mitchell records and PBS, by 1960s-type parents.” These parents had managed to send him to “kind of a fancy Washington private school.” Call it Saint Gorgonzola.

“One day,” Lewis said, “I looked at the faces in my Government Club at Saint Gorgonzola and I thought, ‘This is what Congress will look like in twenty years.’ And I didn’t like those kids—driving SUVs and getting smashed on the weekends and making fun of the gay kid in class.”

He told about going to Yale and getting involved with the College Democrats of America when there hardly were any and how elected officials didn’t pay any attention to them except for this obscure governor of Vermont. Then the College Democrats began to get better organized, and the governor of Vermont began to run for President. When Lewis was in graduate school, Dean came back to speak to a crowd of thousands of College Democrats and received a hero’s welcome, and Lewis got to introduce him.

Dean said to the College Democrats, “I can’t promise that I’ll win this election, but I promise you I’ll make you proud to be Democrats again.”

Lewis said to the house party, “It wasn’t about him. It was about other people.” Lewis smiled in modest triumph. “It was about us,” he said.

Lewis puzzled me. He was the picture of a Saint Gorgonzola old boy—clothes from J. Press, car an unostentatious early-1990s BMW, guacamole dip technique up to Emily Post standards. He was as opposed to politicking-as-usual as he was adept at it. He was affronted by the power elite and had already been recruited by it. What happened at Saint G? Had Lewis’s 1960s-type parents, addled from too much *Mister Rogers* on PBS, sent him to his first meeting of Government Club in a hilarious argyle sweater like the one Wesley Clark wore to New Hampshire?

Charles recounted seeing Dean repeatedly wear an ugly, unfashionable belt, presumably the one Connie saw his suit jacket tucked into. Then Charles had learned that the belt was Dean's dead brother's.

"And you don't think that's a gimmick?" Helen said.

Jessica had become interested in Dean only recently. It was Bush who had been on her mind. "The horror of having him in office, the heartlessness. When will we need a new American revolution? When will it come to that? Then my friend called me and said, 'The revolution is happening—in the Dean campaign. There's a campaign to take America back.'"

Charles nodded approvingly. Lewis looked nonplussed at the talk of revolution. "Everyone," Lewis said, "has a

ple. The empowerment word. The big get bigger ... The IRS tax code needs to be totally revamped. The big corporations running the country is scary."

Lewis didn't look completely at a loss, but he didn't look completely otherwise. "It's not the guy," he said. "Howard Dean is not the one guy in a million who can change politics. It's our campaign that will change politics. What will it change if Kerry or Lieberman gets elected? The same people at the same Georgetown cocktail parties pulling the strings. Half of everybody who can vote in this country don't vote."

"So," Helen said, "once all these people come out of the woodwork, then what happens?"

"It's not just about winning this election," Lewis said.

"We're building networks ... Political systems are a conversation." I'm guessing that was the title of a paper he wrote in graduate school.

"I'm going to get politically involved until things change or I move to Canada," Charles announced. He gave an example of what was better in Canada, something to do with a Muslim civil court for problems in Muslim marriages.

Connie said, "In my lifetime I've never been more afraid of a President. When he, quote, won, I thought, 'He's a dodo-head and what harm can he do?' Boy, was I wrong. George Bush took a knife and made a

big cut in your thigh. If you vote for someone other than Dean, they're just going to put a Band-Aid on it." She continued, too fast for me to get it down, about Dean's willingness to slice out the infected flesh, drain the suppuration, stitch the wound ...

"It's the doctor!" Drew said.

The evening was winding down.

Connie said, "I'm sure Dean will be guilty—I'd like to think not—will be guilty of listening to his advisers."

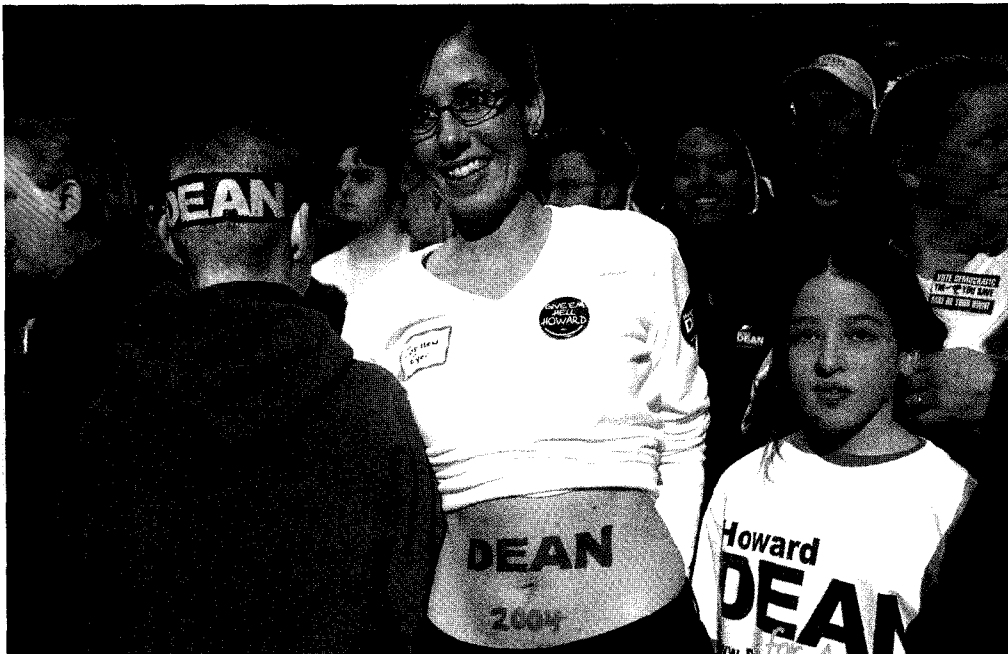
Not much of the wine had been drunk.

Jessica said, "If this government goes on—Republican or Democrat—like it is ... I don't recognize this country. We don't deserve to continue as a country ..."

"The major liberal conundrum," Lewis said, trying to turn the conversation—this being what political systems are—back to practical politics, "is do you vote for the person who'll win and put a Band-Aid on, or do we vote for a person who, if they do get in, things will really change?"

"Seems to me like it's worth a shot," Jessica said.

Lewis said, "Maybe this time it will really happen." ▀



special interest. But it comforts me to know that Governor Dean is not in the pocket of some traditional Democratic special interest—trial lawyers, Hollywood liberals ..."

"I hope," Jessica said, "Dean is as beholden to the people that supported him as the Republicans have been to the people who supported them."

"Anybody running for President is crazy," Connie said, "Dean included. Somebody wanting to run this country—it's bizarre. But ... I feel like he's my neighbor."

Helen remained unconvinced. "Dean obviously has the same values I do," she said. "So does Wes Clark. I don't know enough about the others, like Lieberman."

"Lieberman is a Republican," said Drew.

"Despite my Democratic desire to know all about the issues," Helen said, "I'm tempted to lump them together."

"I do believe Dean's the only hope for the revolution we need to take this country back," Jessica said.

Lewis turned to Helen again. "Do you have questions about specific issues?"

She said, "A more compassionate attitude toward peo-

JOEFF DAVIS

JOHN ASHCROFT'S PERMANENT CAMPAIGN

In the liberal imagination Attorney General John Ashcroft is an authoritarian and a religious zealot, bent on sacrificing liberty to achieve the illusion of safety from terror. But those who see Ashcroft as a zealot are missing Ashcroft the canny politician—a man beholden to both his polls and his God

BY JEFFREY ROSEN

.....

After three years in office John Ashcroft, the Attorney General of the United States, has provoked an impressively bipartisan chorus of invective. From the civil-libertarian left to the libertarian right, his critics agree that he has done more to destroy American liberties than any other Attorney General since A. Mitchell Palmer, who presided over the Red scares of 1919 and 1920. No Democratic presidential candidate has missed the chance to denounce him in the most censorious terms, from Howard Dean ("John Ashcroft is a descendant of Joseph McCarthy") to John Kerry (a crowd "of every creed, every color, every belief, every religion" is "John Ashcroft's worst nightmare"). In November, Al Gore, standing before a cheering crowd of 3,000 in Washington's Constitution Hall, declared that the USA Patriot Act—drafted under the auspices of the Justice Department and passed in the aftermath of 9/11 to strengthen America's defenses against terrorist attacks—should be repealed and that the Bush Administration's treatment of aliens after 9/11 "was little more than a cheap and cruel political stunt by John Ashcroft." Intellectuals have been no less scathing in their denunciations. Gore Vidal declared recently that "the Founding Fathers ... would have hanged anybody who tried to get [the Patriot Act] through the Constitutional Convention," adding that Ashcroft was part of an "alien army." "Many conservatives are sorry they ever supported former Missouri Gov. John Ashcroft's appointment as attorney general," David Keene, the head of the American Conservative Union, who has become one of Ashcroft's strong critics, wrote in *The Hill* in July of 2002.

Jeffrey Rosen is a law professor at George Washington University and the legal-affairs editor of The New Republic. His new book, The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age, has just been published.

"They are upset at him for eviscerating the Constitution since Sept. 11 by sending the PATRIOT Act and other anti-terrorist legislation to the Hill." Grover Norquist, the president of the libertarian Americans for Tax Reform, told *The New York Times*

that Ashcroft's efforts to expand government surveillance have upset even evangelical Christians, once viewed as his staunchest supporters.

Ashcroft remains popular with about half the country; his job-approval ratings have been similar to those for President George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. (Of all Administration officials, only Colin Powell, who reached 74 percent in one poll, scores significantly higher.) But in the eyes of his critics, whom Ashcroft dismisses as a small and vocal minority, he is an American Savonarola—a religious zealot determined to destroy the constitutional structure by imposing his authoritarian beliefs on an unwilling nation. He has become the iconic embodiment of American fears about the sacrifice of liberty for the illusion of security in an age of terror.

But the accepted criticisms of Ashcroft are largely wrong. Far from being a religiously motivated partisan in the culture wars, Ashcroft is in his bones a politician, a fiercely ambitious former senator who has always been willing to discipline his conservative instincts in pursuit of electoral success. And far from pandering to those in his social-conservative base, Ashcroft has largely disappointed them as Attorney General. He has avoided taking positions on culture-war issues that conservatives care about, such as abortion and school prayer, while supporting the expansion of federal power in ways that they fear may be abused by Democratic Presidents in the future.

Advised by an inner circle consisting of former Senate aides who view their job as bolstering their boss's popularity rather than making decisions based on the law alone, Ashcroft has devoted almost all of his energy since 9/11 to marketing himself as tough on terror, a position that inspires opposition only among libertarian minorities. Indeed, by conflating his legal role as a prosecutor with his political role as chief spokesman for the war on terror, he has responded to 9/11 in a way that is neither liberal nor conservative but, instead, is guided almost entirely by public opinion.



One day late last year I checked in at the security desk downstairs at the Justice Department, which displayed a warning that the national terrorist threat index for the day was set at Yellow, or Elevated. After passing through an x-ray inspection chamber installed after 9/11 (I entered through one door, and the other slid open only after my body had been scanned), I was led up to the Attorney General's ornate fifth-floor suite. In the reception room I found a copy of *An American Insurrection*, William Doyle's account of James Meredith's registration at the University of Mississippi, in 1962, which triggered the most dramatic conflict between federal and state authorities since the Civil War. (The author had inscribed the book to Ashcroft, who has long considered himself a fervent opponent of racial discrimination.)

Ushered into Ashcroft's private office, I found him in shirt-sleeves with David Israelite, his deputy chief of staff, and Mark Corallo, the department's young new director of public affairs.

They were bantering about sports. "I'm an old jock," Ashcroft, who was a football star in high school, told me later. "I'm old—you may not believe I'm a jock, but I'm an old jock." In a cabinet across from the couch were two autographed footballs: one signed by the University of Missouri Tigers, and the other from the 2000 Super Bowl, signed by the victorious St. Louis Rams. In an effort to put me at ease, Ashcroft asked a friendly question about the World Series. I am, unfortunately, one of the few men in America unable to engage in basic sports chat, but I managed to blurt out something about an article I had recently read in *The New York Times* about how Mayor Michael Bloomberg had offended his constituents by wearing a Yankees sweater and red socks. "Doesn't he know the first rule of being a politician?" Ashcroft said with a boisterous laugh. "You have to pander to the electorate!" I then pulled out my tape recorder and gestured toward him to ask if I could turn it on. "No, thanks, I don't smoke," Ashcroft said, laughing again. His attempts at humor were awkward and endearing.

When we met, Ashcroft had recently returned from an unusual thirty-two-city tour devoted to defending the USA Patriot Act. Any evaluation of his effectiveness as Attorney General must take place in the context of his association with this legislation, which, more than anything else Ashcroft has said or done, has aroused the ire of civil libertarians. The problem, of course, is that it's difficult for most Americans to have an informed opinion about whether the Patriot Act goes too far in its expansion of domestic surveillance powers. The act is so technical and legally complicated that only policy junkies and law professors have the time to master it.

I suppose I qualify as a junkie of sorts, having written about different aspects of the act for the past two years. But it wasn't until I taught it in a law-school seminar devoted to the balance between liberty and security that I felt knowledgeable enough about its technical details to form a relatively informed opinion. Based on that seminar, I've concluded that some criticism of the act is overblown. "Roving wiretaps," for example, which allow investigators to tap every electronic device a suspect uses, have long been available for drug and racketeering investigations; the Patriot Act corrects an inadvertent gap in the law that denied these wiretaps for investigations of suspected terrorists. (Orin

Far from being a religiously motivated partisan in the culture wars, Ashcroft is in his bones a politician, a fiercely ambitious former senator who has always been willing to discipline his conservative instincts in pursuit of electoral success.

Kerr, a scholar of cyberspace and a law professor at George Washington University, has argued that parts of the Patriot Act actually expand the protection of privacy—by applying to previously unregulated Internet surveillance the same standards that have been applied to searches involving the telephone and regular mail.)

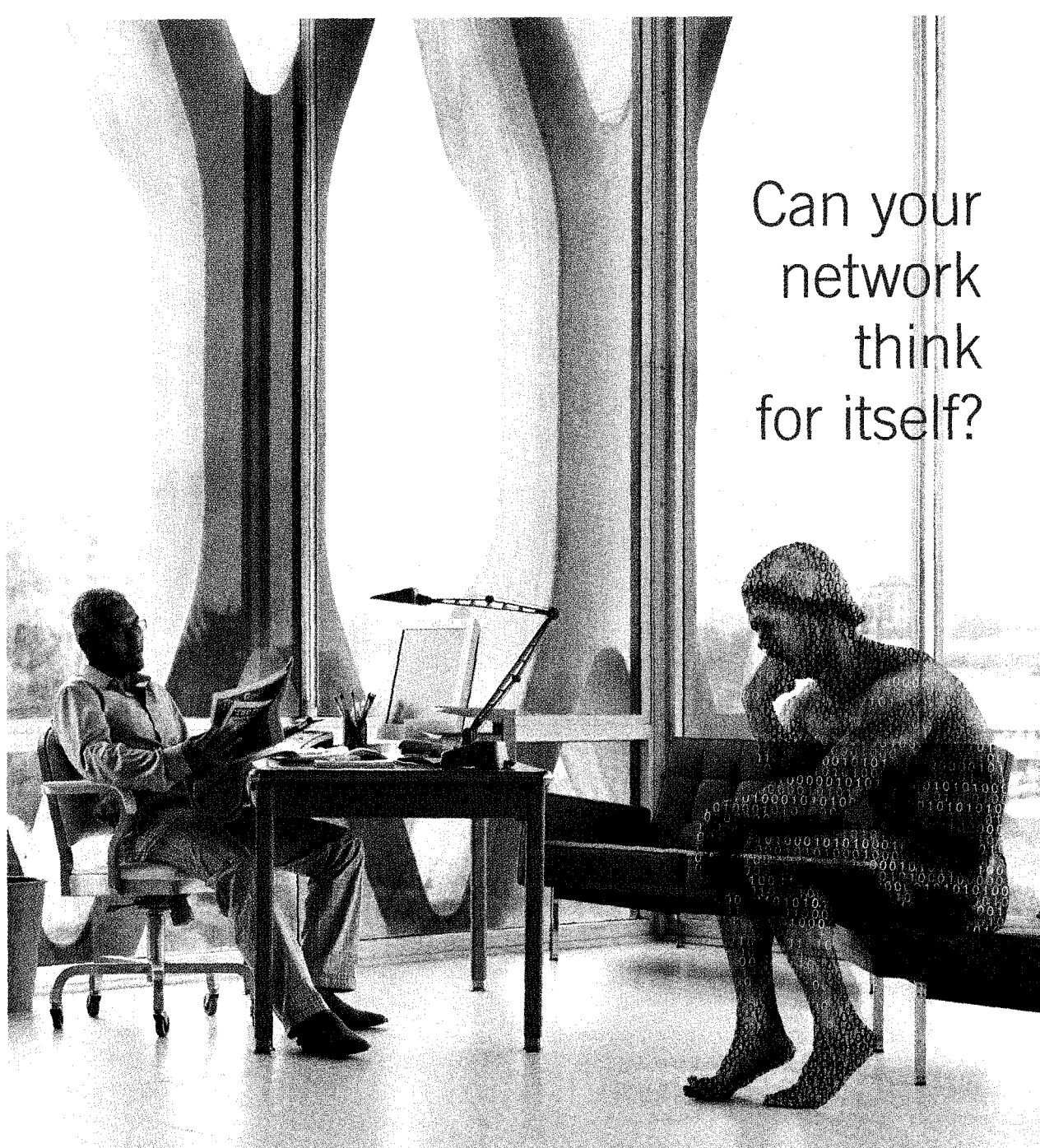
Other parts of the act are more troubling. The most controversial provisions vastly expand the government's authority to search private records and other personal data without notifying a suspect. Before passage of the act the government could search certain personal records—including hotel, airline, and car-rental records—if it could provide evidence to suggest that the records were those of a spy or terrorist. The Patriot Act extended the government's reach to include all tangible information, such as bookstore receipts and library records; the government need not tell the targets their records are being searched, and the record

keepers are not allowed to. Worse, under the act the government no longer need certify in advance that its target is a suspected spy or terrorist. Now government agents can simply assert that the records they seek are "relevant" to an ongoing terrorism investigation. In theory, an unscrupulous Attorney General who wanted to intimidate his opponents could certify that their medical, bank, and Internet records were relevant to a terrorist investigation—just as Richard Nixon retaliated against Vietnam War critics by scouring their tax returns. Banks and doctors and Internet-service providers would be compelled to turn over the critics' data—but prohibited from telling the critics that their records were being searched. And if the Attorney General found evidence of low-level crimes (say, minor financial misdoing), he could threaten prosecution.

This is the essence of the case offered against the Patriot Act by its most thoughtful opponents. As the lone senator to vote against the act two years ago, Russell Feingold, a Wisconsin Democrat, warned that it could be used to prosecute low-level crimes that had nothing to do with terrorism. Today Feingold believes that his fears have been vindicated. "I'm confident that the Department of Justice and the Administration are going too far," he told me not long ago. "A compelling case in *The New York Times* laid out the fact that the USA Patriot Act is being used in a wide number of regular criminal cases ... and to me that's an abuse." To protect citizens from potential abuses, Feingold and other Democrats have joined an array of Republican colleagues to introduce the Security and Freedom Ensured Act of 2003. The SAFE Act would resurrect the requirement that evidence of espionage or terrorism be provided in advance of secret searches. Ashcroft's fall tour was undertaken in direct response to Republican critics, such as Butch Otter, a congressman from Idaho, who persuaded the House in July to vote to repeal the so-called sneak-and-peek provisions of the Patriot Act, which expanded the use of secret searches. Ashcroft worried that critics of the act were defining the debate about civil liberties in ways that could damage the Bush Administration. Feingold said to me, "I believe Ashcroft was told by the White House that the Patriot Act was causing significant political problems for the President on his conservative, right flank. I think they told Ashcroft, 'You have credibility in the country; you have to sell this thing.'"

I asked Ashcroft how he thought the act had been misunderstood.

"These authorities have been available for a long time," he replied. "The roving wiretaps—you're a law professor, you know that doesn't mean the government just roams around and taps wires, which may be the image that's created. It just says that if a guy moves from his cell phone to his office phone to his vacation home and goes across area-code lines, we can follow that. We've had that since 1986 in drug and organized-crime cases; now it's available for following terrorists. It's not a big step, but it's important; and people



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may have thought that the act went further than it did.”

I replied that Ashcroft’s critics in Congress objected not to roving wiretaps alone but to the fact that government agents could now secretly obtain records without providing any evidence that the targets were terrorists. Why, I asked, couldn’t Ashcroft accept the principle of the SAFE Act—that individuals should be identified as particularly suspicious before their data could be secretly searched? “Well, I’d have to see the bill in its totality,” he replied. (In late January, Ashcroft told reporters that President Bush would veto the SAFE Act if it were passed.) “There are people who think we had too much protection before September 11. The ACLU thought that delayed notification of a search was wrong before September 11. They think it’s wrong now. I think we needed to strengthen our hand in the area of legal stuff, and before I think about any retreat,

This seemed like the moment to press Feingold’s objection. If the Patriot Act were used just to prosecute terrorists and murderers, I suggested, not even many libertarians would object. But when broad new surveillance powers were used increasingly to prosecute lower-level crimes that had nothing to do with terrorism—such as fraud, for example—weren’t the critics right that it was vulnerable to abuse?

“That’s certainly a part of the debate that’s okay to have,” he replied evenly. “But what is it about fraud and low-level crimes that’s so attractive that they want to protect it? For someone who works his whole life to save enough money to be independent and to be free in their retirement or golden years—to think that fraud is somehow inconsequential to them? I think that life is a matter of striking balances. What happens to freedom if we can’t interdict fraud?”

Ashcroft knocked over his shoe teepee and rubbed his left



I’d have to be very, very convinced that there are some abuses to be safeguarded against.”

He leaned back in his chair, took off his shoes, and balanced them against each other like a teepee on the floor—an odd habit that former Ashcroft aides I had interviewed had told me to expect. “There’s a presumption out here—and pardon me, I hope it’s not one you embrace, because I’m gonna call it a stupid presumption—that any time you pass a law regulating conduct, you diminish freedom. I would ask people to think about the state of nature with no laws at all ... and you decide to pass a law that says you cannot commit murder, you can’t kill somebody. Are you freer after the law was passed or before the law was passed?” His voice deepened and took on the ominous, official tone that he uses on television. “Now, from *my* perspective—we’re talking about liberty and *freedom*—you’re freer after that law is passed.” He relaxed and reverted to his normal voice. “I throw that out. I wish someone would write that. It seems so simple that it could be written in crayon—it’s so simple that even the Attorney General can understand it.”

shoe with his right foot. “It’s *possible* to infringe freedom: if you wanted to stop murder and didn’t let anybody leave their house, that would be bad.” He looked pensive. “Frankly, I’ve spent a lot of my life very skeptical about passing more laws.”

Warming to his subject, Ashcroft looked at me earnestly. “I think of it this way. Basketball is a better analogy than baseball. You come home from a basketball game and all you’re talking about is the referees, you probably didn’t see a very good game. But if you come home from the game and you’re talking about the players, and they reach their maximum potential because the governance of the game provided for people to be able to develop and exhibit and perform their skills in a fair environment, that’s a good deal. That’s what government’s about.”

Although aides had told me that Ashcroft would enjoy talking about the technical differences between foreign-intelligence wiretaps and grand-jury subpoenas, he seemed more interested in citing poll numbers from August that had been posted on the Justice Depart-

ment's Web site. ("As I recall," he observed, "about fifty-five percent said this is being handled just about right; another twenty percent said, 'Man, we're not doing enough to make us safe.'" The same poll suggested that only 21 percent thought the act went too far. These are the liberal and conservative libertarians that Ashcroft dismisses as a small and vocal minority.) Ashcroft seemed genuinely convinced that the critics of the act were raising entirely hypothetical dangers, and that under his watch the powers granted by the act could be used only for the noble purpose of fighting evil. "Terror is still *extremely* active—it's just not active to the point of combustibility in the United States," he said. "Are we going to walk out of the game with a clean jersey? Maybe not, but we're going to win the game."

As he spoke, I wondered why he was responding to criticism by offering platitudes about sports. But later I

dishing religious beliefs—or political principles—that he hypocritically betrays in practice. Rather, Ashcroft attempts in subtle, complicated ways to balance his political self-interest with a deeply rooted moralism; he views himself as an instrument of some unchanging higher purpose.

This, too, seems to have come from his father, who instilled in him a deep belief that God had a plan for him as for every other individual—and that no matter how difficult the obstacles life presented, he would always be judged by his success in living up to eternal rather than temporal standards. "My father had programmed me to aspire to noble things, even if they were not fully realistic," he writes in *On My Honor*.

Ashcroft has carried this lesson into politics, viewing himself as a principled public servant who is willing to absorb punishing criticism once he has chosen a course he believes is right. As he puts it in *On My Honor*,

In matters of faith, my father . . . taught the importance of delayed gratification. I heard him preach many profound truths of Scripture, but few affected me more than his razor-sharp focus on eternity. One verse always intrigued me: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Ashcroft took to heart his father's constant lessons about the importance of delayed gratification—"putting something off so that you can experience something even better in the future." He remained a virgin until marriage so that he could "more fully enter into the deeper love of the marital union." In college and law school he didn't shrink from taunts about his faith. He didn't dance, drink, or smoke; the only weaknesses he confesses to indulging were for ice cream and chocolates. And his father—who loved positive thinkers such as Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale—urged him from an early age not to passively accept whatever God threw in his path but to do everything possible to fulfill God's plan by working constantly to ensure his success.

Given his upbringing, Ashcroft might have been expected to follow his father (and his grandfather) into the ministry. But after graduating from Yale and the University of Chicago Law School and spending five years as a teacher at Southwest Missouri State University, he found himself temperamentally drawn to politics, and he began what turned out to be a more or less permanent campaign. "Looking back, I'm not sure why I kept running," Ashcroft writes, "except that my father had instilled in me a particular set of values, which I believed needed to be reinforced by government leaders."

Ashcroft entered politics in 1972, when, at the age of thirty, he decided to run in the Republican primary for an open congressional seat. He lost narrowly, winning about 45 percent of the vote. As he tells the story in his book, he



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realized that he was sharing one of what he calls, in his brief campaign autobiography, *On My Honor*, the "core beliefs that shape my life." Published in 1998, as Ashcroft contemplated a presidential run in 2000, the book offers a series of inspirational lessons that he says he learned from his father, J. Robert Ashcroft, an Assemblies of God minister. Using basketball as a metaphor, he emphasizes what people can achieve by approaching life in strategic terms. "In what I call the 'basketball approach to life' you learn to spread the defense, find the open spaces, and create a lane to the basket," Ashcroft writes. "When you see all your options, when you're ready to move instantly in response to the changing circumstances, then you're on your way to the winner's circle."

The most striking thing about Ashcroft's career is how often it has been guided by the basketball approach—that is, how often his politics have been strategic rather than inflexibly ideological. He adapts his political positions at any particular moment to the political realities that constrain him. He's no Elmer Gantry, however, piously bran-

STEVEN HARRIS/POLARIS

was ready to go back to teaching after his defeat, but "God had other plans": out of the blue Kit Bond, the newly elected Republican governor of Missouri, called to offer him the job of state auditor, which Bond himself had recently vacated. "Here I was being handed the fourth-ranking job in the state," Ashcroft writes, "without even asking for it! From one perspective, it just fell into my hands. But there's another side. When you pursue noble things, sometimes noble things pursue you."

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In fact the appointment was less of a bolt from the blue than Ashcroft suggests. As the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* related in 1999, Ashcroft let it be known after his defeat that he was thinking about leaving the party and running against his victorious primary opponent as an independent. That threat may have induced Bond to offer him the state auditor's job, a political plum. However the auditor's job came about, Ashcroft's first defeat led to his "theory about elections," which "is mirrored in what I believe about all of life: for every crucifixion, a resurrection is waiting to follow." He has detected this pattern throughout his career. He writes,

[E]very time I have ever run for something and lost, some type of "resurrection" has followed. When I lost my race for Congress, I was appointed state auditor. After I lost my race to stay in as state auditor, I ended up running for, and winning, the position of [state] attorney general. In the '90s, my failure to be elected chairman of the Republican National Committee led to my successful race for the United States Senate ... God can call us to bigger jobs.

Despite his vision of himself as an instrument of divine purpose, however, Ashcroft's career in state politics did not seem to be driven by the tenets of his Assemblies of God faith, which is often associated with deeply conservative views. This was especially true when he served as governor of Missouri, from 1985 to 1993; as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* has noted, conservative Republicans complained that he compromised too often in an effort to accommodate the Democrats who held the majority in the state legislature. He praised the National Endowment for the Arts (which later,

as a senator, he attempted to dismantle), and he tried—four times—to raise the state tax on cigarettes (a type of tax that, once he was in Washington, he attacked as a burden on the working class). These positions were informed less by his religious beliefs than by the expert advice of political consultants, whom Ashcroft hired to help him market his message as effectively as possible. After his first gubernatorial election, Karl Rove, now known as an adviser to President Bush, advised his Missouri campaigns. And when he first ran for the Senate, he was joined by David Ayres, a consultant who became and remains his chief of staff, and who has dedicated himself to the political health of John Ashcroft.

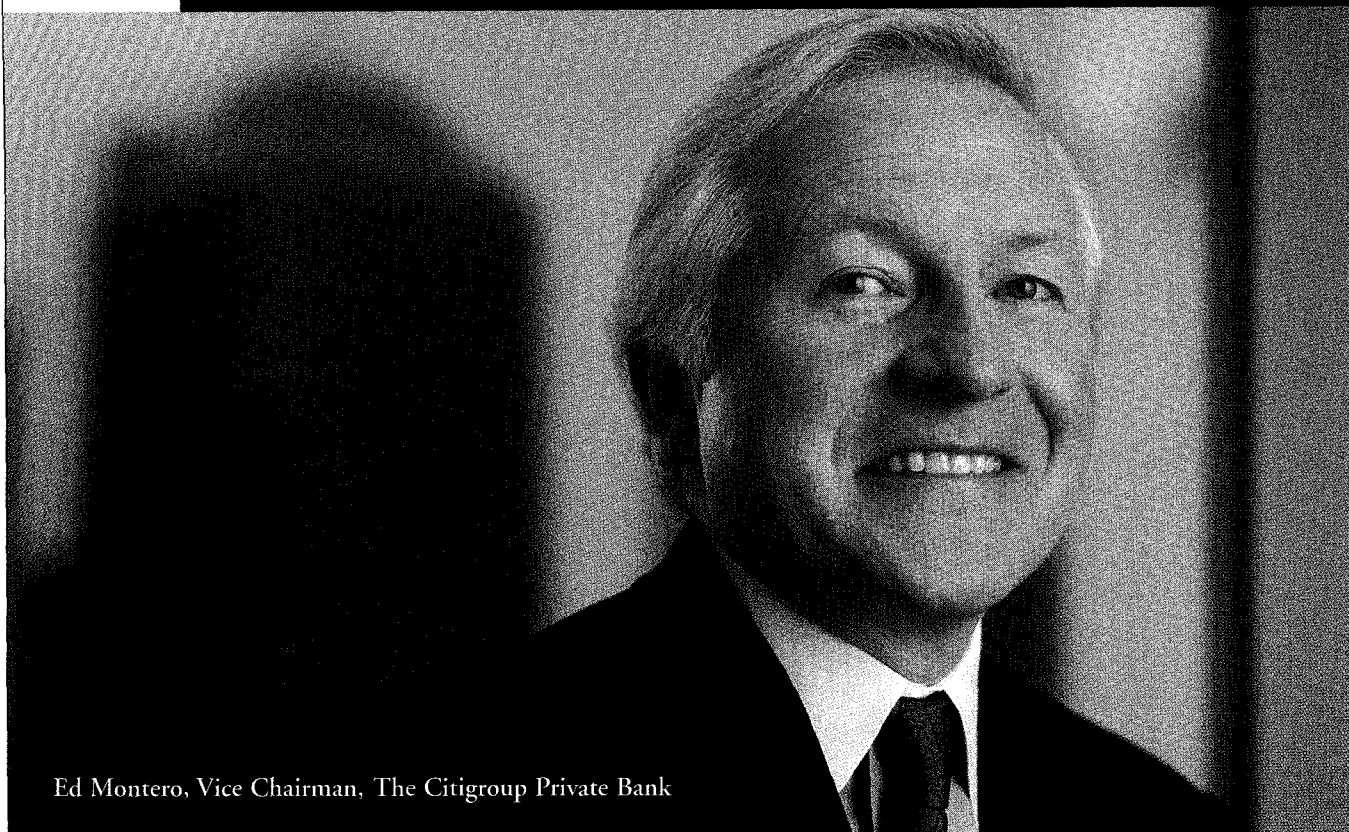
When Ashcroft was elected to the Senate, in 1994, he engineered a political shift. After he decided to run for President in 2000, he decided that he would seek a niche as the candidate of the Christian right, and he did everything possible to cater to that constituency. He sponsored constitutional amendments to ban flag burning and abortion and to resurrect school prayer. "I don't apologize for being unyielding when I speak on behalf of a balanced budget or in opposition to big government or in favor of protecting the lives of unborn children," he wrote in his campaign autobiography, reaching out to libertarians as well as social conservatives.

In his brief presidential run Ashcroft attempted to cash in the capital he had built up with social conservatives over the previous several years. He tried to distinguish himself in a crowded field by being one of the first and most vociferous voices to call for President Bill Clinton's resignation. His stump speech featured a sonogram of his grandchild, which he held up while denouncing abortion. He excoriated gambling and homosexuality as sins, and accepted a \$10,000 donation from Pat Robertson and his wife. Initially his efforts paid off: he came in first in a straw poll of sixty-five national and state Christian Coalition leaders, and beat George W. Bush in a poll of South Carolina Republicans.

But as the Clinton impeachment effort fizzled, so did Ashcroft's campaign. After Republicans were punished for their impeachment zeal in the 1998 midterm elections, and Ashcroft faced the prospect of losing his Senate seat as well as the presidential primaries, he set out to moderate his image by tacking to the center. He continued talking about abortion but also began to deliver anodyne speeches about cutting taxes, improving schools, and fighting crime. Ashcroft's political advisers were candid about their strategy.

In the end journalists found these bland attempts to reinvent himself no more convincing than the New Nixon had been in the late 1960s, and Ashcroft's run to the center failed. After dropping out of the presidential race, he lost his Senate seat to Mel Carnahan, who had been killed in a plane crash three weeks before the election. (If not for this tragedy, Ashcroft might well have won: he was in a statisti-

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A: A good night's sleep.



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cal tie with Carnahan at the time of the crash.) But this crucifixion, as he might have called it, was soon followed by yet another resurrection, when President Bush nominated Ashcroft as Attorney General of the United States.

Ashcroft wasn't the President's first choice: Bush had preferred two candidates to whom he was much closer—Governor Frank Keating, of Oklahoma, and Governor Marc Racicot, of Montana. But Keating failed to make it through the vetting process after it emerged that he had accepted a total of \$250,000 in gifts from the financier Jack Dreyfus, whom he then helped to promote a mood-altering drug for prisoners. Then, when religious conservatives learned that Bush was on the verge of nominating Racicot, they told Karl Rove that Racicot was too moderate. When Racicot declined the job, citing family financial pressures, the conservatives bragged that they had forced him out. They lobbied for Ashcroft, who his old adviser Rove assured the President would be a team player. Supported by moderate senators such as Jim Jeffords and Arlen Specter, and praised for his gracious concession to Mel Carnahan's widow, Ashcroft told Bush he would be easily confirmed.

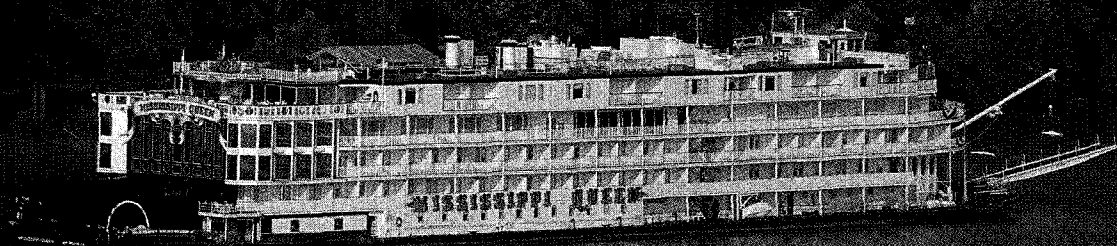
He wasn't. Democrats—still bitter that the Supreme Court, in *Bush v. Gore*, had awarded the 2000 presidential election to the Republicans—were spoiling for a confirmation fight, and Ashcroft proved to be the most convenient symbol of the social-conservative world view that inspires such intense fear and antipathy in the Democratic base. An army of interest groups swung into action. "Ashcroft's confirmation hearings were Ralph Neas's dress rehearsal for [blocking] a Supreme Court nomination," says Adam Ciongoli, Ashcroft's former counselor at the Justice Department, referring to the president of People for the American Way, a liberal advocacy group. "Neas convinced America that the Attorney General has an important role in all these social issues, but once we got there, it became very clear to everyone that in fact ... the Attorney General is really about law enforcement."

On re-reading the transcripts of the confirmation hearings, it's striking how Neas and other Ashcroft opponents (like everyone else) failed to predict the issue that would end up being the most controversial of Ashcroft's tenure as Attorney General: his embrace of sweeping federal power and the national-security state. Treating Ashcroft as if he were a prospective Supreme Court nominee, Democratic senators grilled him repeatedly about whether he would enforce the laws on abortion and school prayer as laid down by the courts, or attempt to overturn them in light of his religious views. Ashcroft specifically assured Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy that he would enforce abortion laws, and California Senator Dianne Feinstein that he would enforce gun-control laws. Even so, he was confirmed by a vote of only 52–48. No Bush nominee had a smaller margin of victory.

In his first months as Attorney General, Ashcroft did more or less what he had promised to do during the confirmation hearings. In fact, his policies were hard to distinguish from those of his Democratic predecessor, Janet Reno. He established three priorities, all of them popular: enforcing civil-rights laws against racial discrimination and racial profiling; cracking down on gun violence by spending more than \$200 million a year on a project called Safe Neighborhoods; and renewing the war on drugs. Ashcroft did inspire a brief controversy when he wrote a letter to the National Rifle Association declaring that "the text and the original intent of the Second Amendment clearly protect the right of individuals to keep and bear firearms." But he continued to enforce federal gun laws—and he retreated from the positions laid out in his letter when the White House got skittish. At another point Ashcroft provoked objections that he had betrayed his states'-rights principles when he embraced controversial interpretations of federal law that restricted the states' ability to experiment with assisted suicide and medical marijuana. But these tentative forays into the culture wars were notable exceptions to his general moderation. In the wake of his divisive confirmation hearings, the White House had made clear that it didn't want any culture-war explosions. So to prove he was a good soldier, Ashcroft played more to the middle than to the right.

Indeed, his letter to the NRA aside, Ashcroft avoided all the hot-button cultural issues that had preoccupied senators and interest groups during his confirmation hearings. The Justice Department later angered social conservatives and anti-abortion activists by defending the constitutionality of the Freedom of Access to Clinics Entrances Act of 1994, which a lower-court judge had struck down as exceeding Congress's power. Ashcroft stayed out of the debates provoked when the Bush White House opened its office of faith-based initiatives—even though faith-based initiatives had been a signature issue for him in the Senate. He played only a small role in selections for the federal judiciary (another of his principal interests in the Senate), which under Bush have been controlled mainly by the White House counsel's office, anyway. Social conservatives were increasingly disappointed; they believed Ashcroft's aides were muzzling his true self, his inner conservative.

The most striking thing about Ashcroft's first year as Attorney General wasn't his substantive positions but the way he organized his office. He approached the job like the former senator he was, with a tightly knit inner circle of deputies who had tended to his political interests in the Senate and were always positioning him for maximum political advantage. Ashcroft's chief of staff, David Ayres, and his deputy chief of staff, David Israelite ("the Davids," as they are known within the Justice Department), soon gained a reputation for looking at legal



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and policy decisions as an opportunity to shore up Ashcroft's popularity with different constituencies and to accrue political capital.

As Ayres began issuing important orders for the Justice Department, career prosecutors and department lawyers felt cut off from Ashcroft and his inner circle. Ashcroft met with assistant attorneys general far less frequently than had previous Republican attorneys general, such as Ed Meese, under Ronald Reagan, and William Barr, under the first President Bush. E-mails circulated in which Ashcroft made clear that he didn't want to see assistants he didn't know at meetings. "The career people feel resentful, and pushed out of things they've been doing in lots of administrations," says a former senior Justice Department official.

Before the terror attacks of 2001 there was an air of aimlessness about the Ashcroft Justice Department: he seemed to be positioning himself for something, but even those relatively close to him weren't sure what. After 9/11, however, Ashcroft experienced another resurrection.

"I think for him things changed overnight," says Israelite. "I was with him on the plane when we got the news, and he said, 'This has changed the world forever.'" In Ashcroft's response to 9/11 his political and religious urges fused: being as tough as possible on terrorism was consistent with his Manichaean view of the world. "I think he sees this as a civilizational clash," a former aide says. "He sees these people as enemies of everything he believes in, as a sort of religiously based threat. It really touched him in a more profound way than a more secular person might have experienced."

According to Israelite, Ashcroft immediately focused "like a laser" on preventing, rather than prosecuting, terrorism. Success in this goal is by definition hard to measure, since attacks that are prevented may never be revealed. But even if his role in preventing attacks is impossible to prove, the public seems to give Ashcroft some credit for the fact that no attack has occurred on American soil since 9/11.

And he has not been shy about publicizing his successes as much as possible. On several occasions this tendency has gotten Ashcroft into trouble. In June of 2002, for example, when he was in Moscow to meet with Russian officials, he made the mistake of rushing in front of television cameras on a live satellite feed and intoning in his scariest voice, "We have disrupted an unfolding plot to attack the United States by exploding a radioactive dirty bomb." He identified the culprit as Jose Padilla, who was declared an enemy combatant and was sent to a military prison. In fact there was no evidence that Padilla had gone beyond thinking about a bomb; no bomb was ever found, and no clear evidence emerged to connect him with an active al-Qaeda plot. Ashcroft also exaggerated the threat that a "dirty bomb" would pose, and failed to explain that it wasn't a nuclear weapon. The President's aides were furious—Padilla's arrest was supposed to have been made public in Washing-

ton, by senior Justice and Defense Department officials—and also distressed that Ashcroft's hyperbolic language had prevented an expected rally in the tumbling stock market. "After 16 months in office," complained the conservative columnist Robert Novak, who is close to the White House, "Ashcroft seeks the spotlight as if he were still a senator contemplating a presidential run." The White House made clear to Ashcroft and his advisers that the Attorney General had to curtail his pursuit of the spotlight and have his important appearances okayed in advance.

Ashcroft's public statements have also rankled at least one of the federal judges responsible for deciding his terrorism cases: Gerald E. Rosen, of the U.S. District Court in Michigan, who presided over the trial of four men in Detroit accused by the government of conspiring to commit terrorism in Jordan and Turkey. Charged with planning "specific violent attacks," two of the men were convicted in June 2003 of conspiracy to commit document fraud and conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, and a third was convicted on the fraud charge alone. At the request of the Justice Department and the defendants, Judge Rosen imposed a gag order in October of 2001. A week later Ashcroft announced at a news conference that "three Michigan men suspected of having knowledge of the September 11, 2001, attacks ... were arrested on charges of possessing false documents." (The fourth suspect was arrested a year later, in North Carolina.) At the time, the government had offered no evidence that the defendants had any advance knowledge of 9/11. When Rosen expressed concern that Ashcroft might have violated the gag order, Ashcroft formally withdrew the remarks, and one of his aides apologized to the judge. In August of 2002, however, Fox News reported that the government was planning to charge the four Detroit men with terrorism, and quoted from the indictment the day before the grand jury publicly issued it. Rosen, furious that the indictment had been leaked, summoned Larry Thompson, then Ashcroft's deputy attorney general, and warned him against further violations of the gag order. But in April of 2003 Ashcroft did it again: during a Washington news conference he praised the government's chief witness in the Detroit case, whose testimony, he said, was of "substantial value" and a "critical tool for our war on terrorism." In response Judge Rosen angrily criticized Ashcroft. "I was concerned and distressed to wake up this morning to hear the Attorney General discuss the credibility of a witness in this trial," he said in court. "I believe the Attorney General is subject to the orders of this court." The defendants' lawyers moved for a mistrial and asked Rosen to hold Ashcroft in contempt of court, which would have made him only the second Attorney General in history to be cited for criminal contempt. Rosen declined to file contempt charges, but in December he publicly admonished Ashcroft for confusing his roles as prosecutor and public spokesman for the war on terror.

But if it's fair to criticize Ashcroft for grandstanding in his desire to be tough on terror, he has also preserved some of the libertarian suspicion of federal power that he displayed as a senator. "His aggressiveness in pursuing the 9/11 investigation is very significantly tempered by a fairly clear libertarian impulse," says Viet Dinh, a former assistant attorney general who was in charge of coordinating the drafting of the Patriot Act. "When we started working on the [act], there were proposals coming in by the truckload, and he said clearly and personally, 'This is not Christmas in September.'" According to former aides, the White House counsel's office originally proposed a broad delegation of power to the Defense Department, with few checks. Ashcroft insisted that civilian powers be transferred to the Pentagon only with the concurrence of the Attorney General.

It's hardly obvious, furthermore, that the Patriot Act that emerged from Ashcroft's Justice Department is significantly different from what would have emerged under a less polarizing Republican Attorney General—such as the respected Larry Thompson, for example. "The liberals are attacking the policy views of Larry Thompson, Michael Chertoff, and Bob Mueller, not Ashcroft," says a former Justice Department official, referring to Ashcroft's former chief deputies and the head of the FBI. "These are not religious culture warriors. They are lifelong prosecutors, people who use criminal law to attack real problems. If Larry Thompson were Attorney General, he wouldn't have such a public face, he would receive more respect and confidence from the legal community. But in terms of the war on terror, I don't think the substance would be that different." It can be argued, in fact, that even if Al Gore were President, the post-9/11 terrorism bill championed by his Attorney General would have looked very much like the Patriot Act—which includes several anti-terrorism provisions sought by the Clinton Administration after the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, and resisted by libertarians in Congress.

If Ashcroft's substantive positions aren't radically out of the law-enforcement mainstream, why has he become such a polarizing figure? I asked him this question directly, noting that John Kerry, on the campaign trail, had effectively called him a racist. How did he feel? Ashcroft winced. "I feel badly," he said. "But you know, I would rather be called a racist than for me to call someone else a racist. I would rather have my wallet stolen than to steal someone else's wallet ... That to me is a very serious charge, because it repudiates everything I believe in. I don't believe we're here by accident. I'm a religious person. I believe we are created by God, and I don't believe that God created any inferior people." Leaning forward in his chair, he said of his harshest critics, "Frankly, it's a sad, sad thing, and I feel worse for them than I do for myself."

I asked Ashcroft if he thought that prejudice against fundamentalist Christians might explain some of the more outrageous caricatures of him. My wife, I mentioned, was raised as a fundamentalist Christian; her biological mother was a member of Ashcroft's church, the Assemblies of God, and she attended fundamentalist schools. Although no longer a believer, my wife has often been struck by the many ways in which secular culture misunderstands fundamentalists. Pentecostal congregations now represent a quarter of all Christians worldwide, and the Assemblies of God is one of the largest Pentecostal denominations in the United States. Nevertheless, its adherents are widely ridiculed in America as alien and odd. Fundamentalist Christians, my wife believes, are one of the few religious groups that many Americans feel free to hold in open contempt. Did he agree?

Ashcroft made the mistake of rushing in front of television cameras on a live satellite feed and intoning in his scariest voice, "We have disrupted an unfolding plot to attack the United States by exploding a radioactive dirty bomb." In fact there was no evidence that the culprit had gone beyond thinking about a bomb.

"I don't know," he said cautiously. He seemed uncomfortable at the idea of casting himself as the victim of anti-fundamentalist prejudice, though the suggestion clearly registered. (At the end of my interview with him, he looked at me earnestly and clapped me on the shoulder. "Tell your wife thank you for helping someone like you understand a guy like me.") He returned the discussion to Kerry's remark. "Let's not forget the time and place. I'm out of politics now, but I'm in a political environment ... For certain presidential candidates to emerge, they have to get themselves above the radar, so they have to say things that get *your* attention ... So I tend not to be very judgmental about statements made by people who are thinking about whether they want to serve the country as President." Although failure to be judgmental is not something of which Ashcroft is commonly accused, he is able, when evaluating his fellow politicians, to muster a sophisticated sense of charity and understanding.

I recalled that Ashcroft writes in his book, "The verdict

of history is inconsequential; the verdict of eternity is what counts." He adds, with appealing humility, that he "probably won't be" remembered. I asked him what he thought his legacy would be. "The question is not how you're going to be remembered; the fact is you're *not* going to be remembered!" he said enthusiastically. "In real life the people who survive the longest are painters: you have paintings on the walls of caves, found in France and other places. I've seen 'em. Painters, sculptors, and artists. The next longest lasting people in the culture are poets. But you know, there's a high exposure at the time for politicians. Frankly, I talked about the truth being the friend of the Patriot Act, and the truth is the friend of *everything*. That's what's real and what lasts."

He looked pensive. "I don't want to say that I don't care what people are saying or thinking, because it might reveal for me that I'm way off." He cupped his ear. "I'm standing with my finger in my ear like this, and off first base, the pitcher is starting to make a move, and I'm going to get picked off, and someone yells from the stands, '*Belly up, Ashcroft, you're about to be picked off!*'" and I dive back in, get my hand on the base before the fielder's mitt slaps me on the shoulder, and I get up—you know how you get up and put your foot on the base, dust yourself off, and you look at

the guy and say, 'Thanks, buddy.' You have to be extremely careful, especially when the risk of error is great, and the risks in terms of national security are substantial. We have to make good decisions about listening carefully when it comes to freedom and liberty ... so we welcome voices, but we make decisions that we believe will be validated in the long haul as being real and true."

If Bush is re-elected, will Ashcroft serve a second term? People close to the Administration say that Bush might choose to replace Ashcroft with the White House counsel, Alberto Gonzales, who would be the first Hispanic Attorney General, or with Larry Thompson, who would be the first African-American Attorney General. When I asked David Israelite if Ashcroft would serve a second term, he demurred. "Every Cabinet secretary should resign after the election, and then it's up to the President. If he's asked to serve again, he'll have to make a decision. The average tenure for an Attorney General is a couple of years, and I would argue that legacy is more important than length of tenure. I don't know if he'd come back for a second term."

If Bush doesn't ask him to serve a second term, what will Ashcroft do next? For much of the past three years his rivals in the White House counsel's office have been grumbling that he must be running for President in 2008. But Ashcroft's close aides and friends dismiss this possibility. "I believe he is done running for political office," Israelite says. "He said he doesn't ever expect to run for another office again. If he's not Attorney General, he'll find a way to enjoy life—writing, speaking, traveling, we'll see. But he's not being coy. He's not running."

Why, then, has he given the impression as Attorney General that he is engaged in a permanent campaign? Perhaps because running for office is what he has always done, just as positioning him for political advantage is what his aides have always done. A close associate whom Ashcroft has assured he won't run for office again says, "I think Ayres and Israelite do what they do because they believe it's in Ashcroft's interest to be popular: they think that if he's popular, when necessary he can spend political capital more easily. They do what they do because that's what they do: it's their natural skill set." According to this straightforward and plausible explanation, Ashcroft is not especially craven or unprincipled. It also suggests, however, that he might have done better to take the distinction between prosecution and politics more seriously. Instead of devoting his years in office to building up political capital that he will never spend, he could have taken a few risks, such as striking balanced compromises with his libertarian critics rather than rejecting them out of hand. But the continuing support for the Patriot Act by about 70 percent of the American people suggests that this would have required him to challenge public opinion rather than catering to it at every turn.

CHILDHOOD

Exiled once, allowed back in
to guide you through,
I didn't know my time was up.
But by the river, in snapping grass,
still in the habit of noticing,
crouching with you at a leaf or wing,
I spotted caterpillar frass
speckling milkweed as he feasted,
getting ready to split, released
from a too tight self. In just a week
he'd grow a better, brasher skin.
Exiled once, allowed back in,
I leaned down in the snapping grass,
but stopped at the thud of your new voice:
Come on. Big deal. So what.

—DEBRA BRUCE

*Debra Bruce teaches at Northeastern Illinois University.
Her most recent collection is What Wind Will Do (1997).*

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I had been told that Ashcroft's hero is Abraham Lincoln, so I took to our meeting a copy of *Lincoln's Constitution*, a new book by the constitutional scholar Daniel Farber about Lincoln's civil-liberties record during the Civil War. I told Ashcroft about Farber's thesis: that Lincoln's record regarding the Constitution, although not perfect, was very creditable, given that Lincoln presided during the greatest crisis in American history. Most of what he did was arguably constitutional—and in cases where Lincoln acted in a legal vacuum, Congress tended to ratify his actions after the fact. Ashcroft perked up. "You don't mind if I make a note?" he asked, rising from his chair and going over to his computer, on a modest desk that faced the wall. As he took down Farber's name, I asked Ashcroft what he had learned from Lincoln's efforts to balance liberty and security in wartime. "This probably isn't very legalistic," he said. "I think real leadership doesn't take people where they're already going ... a

"You know, people wouldn't think of me and Gore Vidal in the same breath, but you gotta respect the guy; he has a tremendous intellect." (Several weeks after Ashcroft said this, Vidal would deem him part of an "alien army.")

real leader identifies noble objectives and then motivates people with such intense and personal devotion to those objectives themselves that people are inspired to pursue them. Now, the genius of Lincoln was not winning the war. The genius of Lincoln was preserving the unity of America." Ashcroft mentioned that many people after the war wanted to make the South a subservient nation, but Lincoln refused. "A wise friend of mine once said, 'The dogs may bark but the caravan moves on.' [Lincoln] put up with a lot of barking dogs, but he had a vision for what America could be, should be, and didn't want a lot of buts and could-haves and should-haves."

Ashcroft asked me a question. "Did you read that Gore Vidal book about Lincoln?" I confessed that I had loved it. "That's a great book!" he agreed. "You know, people wouldn't think of me and Gore Vidal in the same breath, but you gotta respect the guy; he has a tremendous intellect." (Several weeks later Vidal would deem him part of an "alien army.") He said that Vidal's book reminded him that Lincoln had been shot at even before his trip to Ford's Theater. "He'd come in with a hole in his hat ... he had powder on his jacket. So he could have easily been dissuaded. You know, you can get all the Gallup information you want, but two bullets would usually be more persuasive. He was willing to

have a very serious sense of personal sacrifice to achieve his end. That willingness to sacrifice personally communicated irrevocably to the people of the country, with a cacophony of debate swirling around him ... there was an indelible sort of mark made on the American psyche and consciousness that will never be erased." Evidently surprised by his own enthusiasm, he leaned back in his chair. "You got me started on Lincoln. I'm sorry."

Ashcroft says he learned from Lincoln's civil-liberties record in wartime the same lesson he learned from his father: the importance in politics of identifying a noble objective and inspiring people to pursue it in the face of withering criticism. But Farber's book draws a different conclusion. Lincoln's genius, Farber argues, stemmed from his ability to combine political pragmatism with constitutional precision of the highest order. Rather than claiming that ordinary legal procedures should be entirely suspended during wartime, he asserted the much narrower power to suspend ordinary procedures in actual areas of war or insurrection. He didn't claim that the President had the power to unilaterally suspend the writ of habeas corpus in all circumstances; instead he claimed the emergency power to suspend the writ in areas of war or insurrection when Congress wasn't able to act. And rather than insisting that Congress and the courts had no role to play in reviewing his actions, he persuaded Congress to grant him that emergency power after the fact. Farber argues that what both constrained and liberated Lincoln was his personal engagement with the technical legal arguments that shaped his actions. He didn't depend on deputies to provide legal justification for actions he had already taken.

When I apologized for the fact that Farber's book was a little technical, Ashcroft made a self-deprecating joke: "You can tell I'm not a very good technical lawyer. I went to the University of Chicago Law School when they were offering scholarships to kids." But it was Lincoln's skill as a technical lawyer that allowed him to save the Constitution and the Union at the same time. Instead of dismissing the value of legal argument, Lincoln challenged his critics and also his supporters to embrace something larger than their political disagreement: the ideal of constitutional liberty itself. Although Ashcroft is too modest to compare himself directly with the Great Emancipator, Lincoln's ability to view the crisis facing the nation in legal rather than political terms is what has made him such a unifying symbol in all the ways that Ashcroft is a polarizing one. Had Ashcroft followed Lincoln's example and engaged his opponents' legal arguments, rather than playing to the public's fears, he might have presided over the refinement of the Patriot Act so that its authority was directed at terrorists and not ordinary criminals. In citing Lincoln as an inspiration, Ashcroft seems to have focused on Lincoln's pragmatism while ignoring his legalism; and in the process Lincoln's faith in the unifying power of law itself has somehow eluded him. ▀

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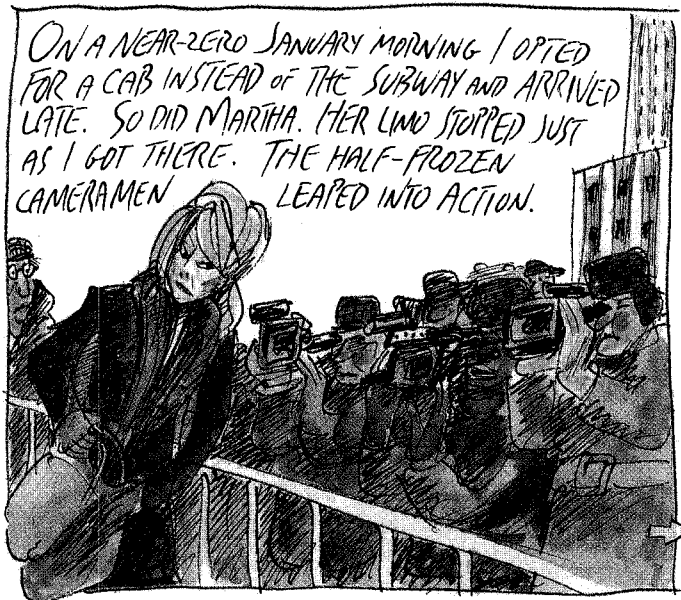
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How I Covered the Martha Stewart Trial and Learned Compassion for the



INSIDE, I HEADED FOR THE FRONT BENCH RESERVED FOR ARTISTS. FIVE WOMEN WITH LARGE SETS OF PASTELS AND ENORMOUS SHEETS OF PAPER EYED MY TINY NOTEBOOK SUSPICIOUSLY. BUT THEY LET ME IN.



AFTER WARNING US THAT WE WERE NOT TO DRAW THE JURORS, JUDGE CEDARBAUM BADE THEM ENTER. IN THEY WALKED, NONE CHOSEN FOR SARTORIAL ELEGANCE. THIS WAS NOT A JURY OF MARTHA'S PEERS.

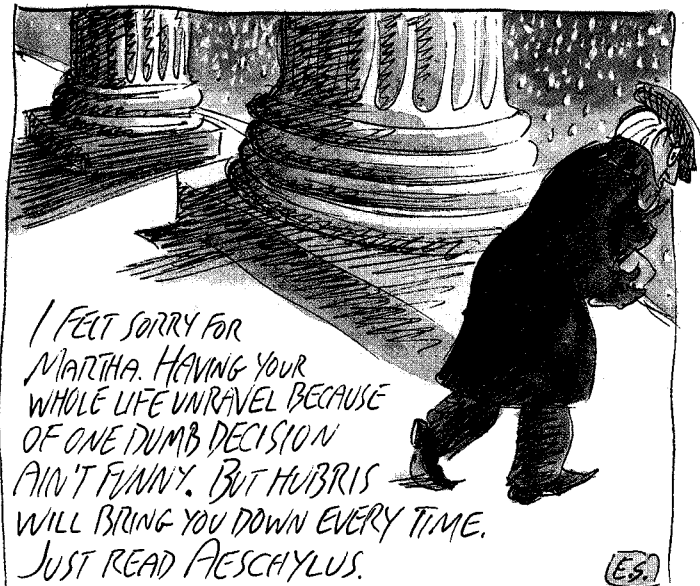
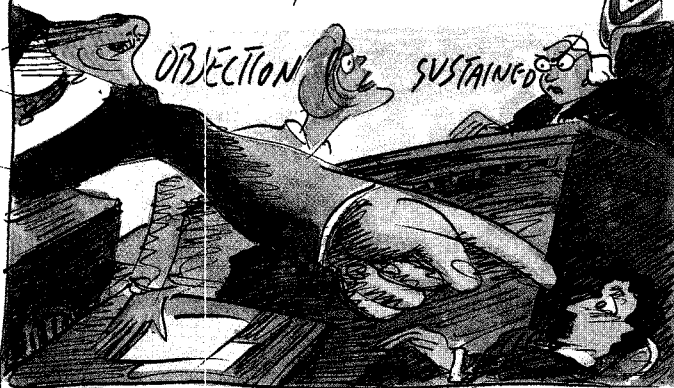
LATER I SPOTTED DOMINICK DUNNE, BARBARA WALTERS (MARTHA'S FRIEND), AND HENRY BLODGET (A FORMER WALL STREETER WHO PROMOTED WORTHLESS STOCKS). NOW AN ACKNOWLEDGED EXPERT ON UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR, HE WAS THERE AS A REPORTER FOR SLATE.



DAYS OF DULL TESTIMONY FOLLOWED, AS EVERYONE AWAITED THE PROSECUTION'S STAR WITNESS, DOUGLAS FANEUIL. ONCE HE WAS IN COURT, IT WAS EASY TO SEE WHY HE HAD SQUEALED RATHER THAN RISK JAIL. HE WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL.

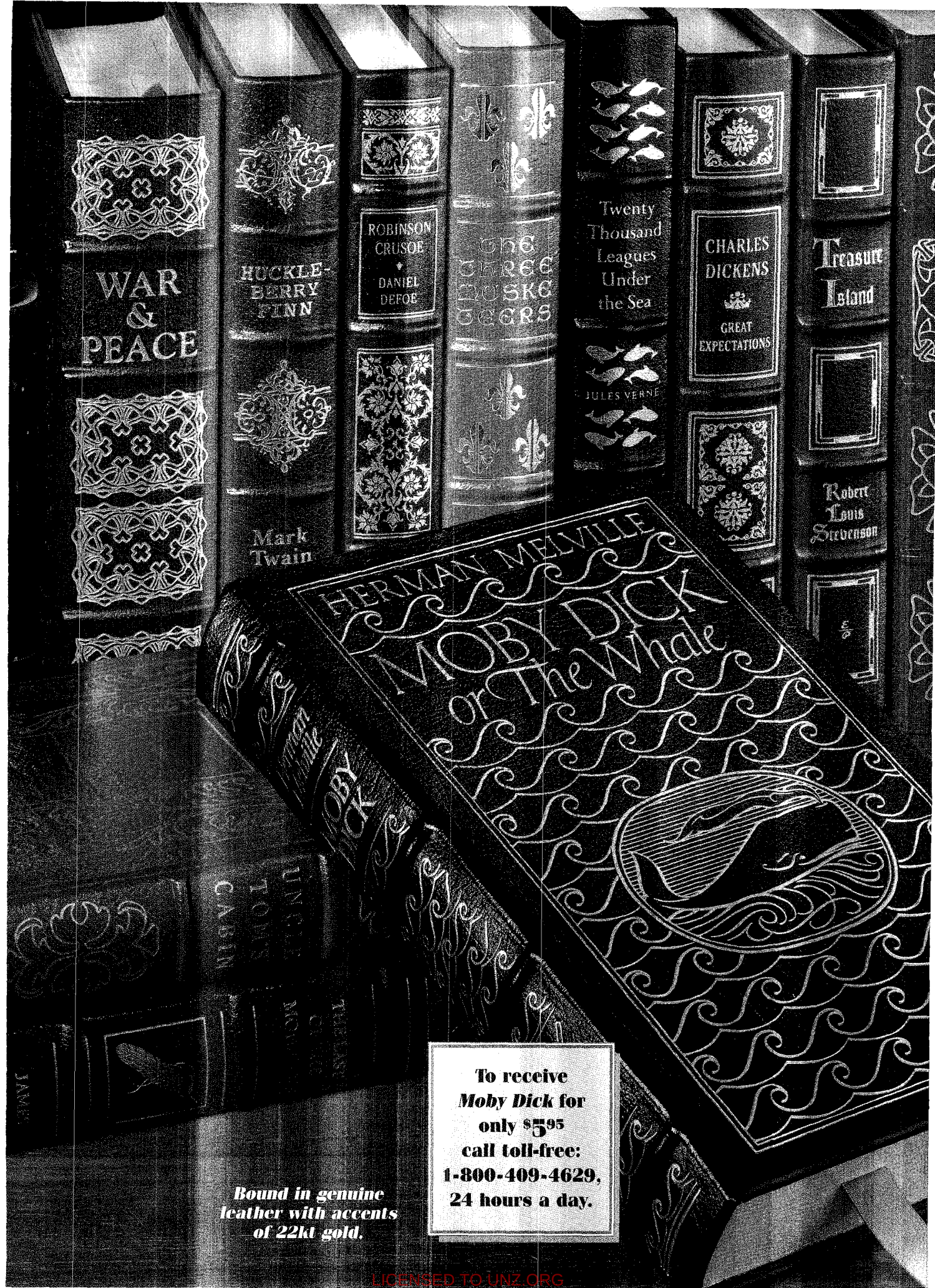


THE DEFENSE TRIED TO IMPUGN FANEUIL'S TESTIMONY BY DWELLING ON HIS USE OF MARIJUANA, BUT HOURS OF CROSS-EXAMINATION FAILED TO RATTLE HIM. THE QUESTIONING WAS GETTING REPETITIOUS. I HAD HEARD ENOUGH.



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A MORE PERFECT UNION

How the Founding Fathers would have handled gay marriage

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

Illustration by Jason Schneider

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Last November the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled that excluding gay couples from civil marriage violated the state constitution. The court gave the legislature six months—until May—to do something about it. Some legislators mounted efforts to amend the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage, but as of this writing they have failed (and even if passed, a ban would not take effect until at least 2006). With unexpected urgency the country faces the possibility that marriage licenses might soon be issued to homosexual couples. To hear the opposing sides talk, a national culture war is unavoidable.

But same-sex marriage neither must nor should be treated as an all-or-nothing national decision. Instead individual states should be left to try gay marriage if and when they choose—no national ban, no national mandate. Not only would a decentralized approach be in keeping with the country's most venerable legal traditions; it would also improve, in three ways, the odds of making same-sex marriage work for gay and straight Americans alike.

First, it would give the whole country a chance to learn. Nothing terrible—in fact, nothing even noticeable—seems to have happened to marriage since Vermont began allowing gay civil unions, in 2000. But civil unions are not marriages. The only way to find out what would happen if same-sex couples got marriage certificates is to let some of us do it. Turning marriage into a nationwide experiment might be rash, but trying it in a few states would provide test cases on a smaller scale. Would the divorce rate rise? Would the marriage rate fall? We should get some indications before long. Moreover, states are, as the saying goes, the laboratories of democracy. One state might opt for straightforward legalization. An-



other might add some special provisions (for instance, regarding child custody or adoption). A third might combine same-sex marriage with counseling or other assistance (not out of line with a growing movement to offer social-service support to so-called fragile families). Variety would help answer some important questions: Where would gay marriage work best? What kind of community support would it need? What would be the avoidable pitfalls? Either to forbid same-sex marriage nationwide or to legalize it nationwide would be to throw away a wealth of potential information.

Just as important is the social benefit of letting the states find their own way. Law is only part of what gives marriage its binding power; community support and social expectations are just as important. In a community that looked on same-sex marriage with bafflement or hostility, a gay couple's marriage certificate, while providing legal benefits, would confer no social support from the heterosexual majority. Both the couple and the community would be shortchanged. Letting states choose gay marriage wouldn't guarantee that everyone in the state recognized such marriages as legitimate, but it would pretty well ensure that gay married couples could find some communities in their state that did.

Finally, the political benefit of a state-by-state approach is not to be underestimated. This is the benefit of avoiding a national culture war.

The United States is not (thank goodness) a culturally homogeneous country. It consists of many distinct moral communities. On certain social issues, such as abortion and homosexuality, people don't agree and probably never will—and the signal political advantage of the federalist system is that they don't have to. Individuals and groups who find the values or laws of

*Jonathan Rauch is a correspondent for The Atlantic. This article is drawn from his book *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*, to be published this month by Times Books, an imprint of Henry Holt and Company.*

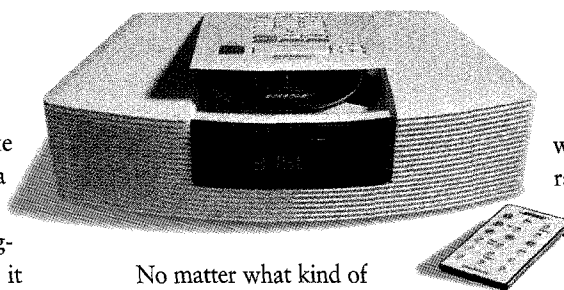
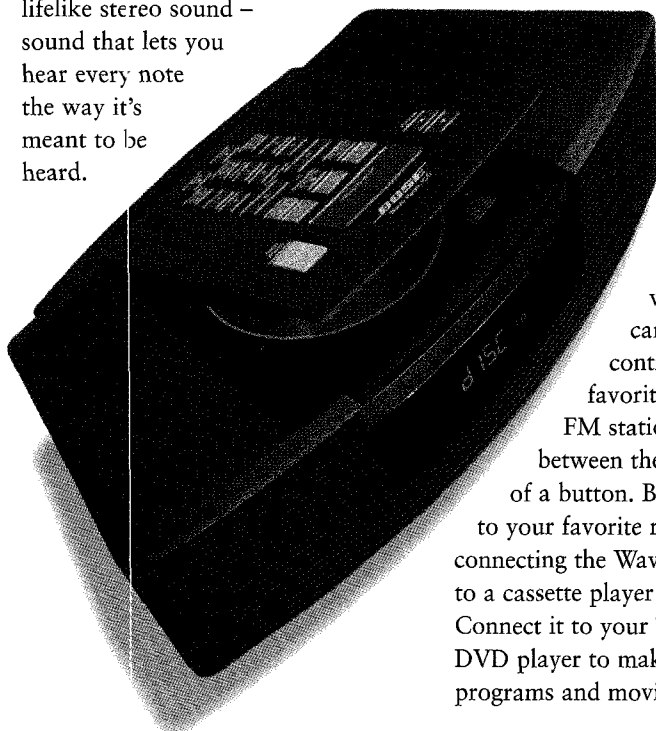
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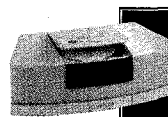
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one state obnoxious have the right to live somewhere else.

The nationalization of abortion policy in the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision created a textbook example of what can happen when this federalist principle is ignored. If the Supreme Court had not stepped in, abortion would today be legal in most states but not all; pro-lifers would have the comfort of knowing they could live in a state whose law was compatible with their views. Instead of endlessly confronting a cultural schism that affects every Supreme Court nomination, we would see occasional local flare-ups in state legislatures or courtrooms.

The nationwide imposition of same-sex marriage by the courts might discredit both gay marriage and the courts, and the public rancor it unleashed might be at least as intense as that surrounding abortion.

America is a stronger country for the moral diversity that federalism uniquely allows. Moral law and family law govern the most intimate and, often, the most controversial spheres of life. For the sake of domestic tranquillity, domestic law is best left to a level of government that is close to home.

So well suited is the federalist system to the gay-marriage issue that it might almost have been set up to handle it. In a new land whose citizens followed different religious traditions, it would have made no sense to centralize marriage or family law. And so marriage has been the domain of local law not just since the days of the Founders but since Colonial times, before the states were states. To my knowledge, the federal government has overruled the states on marriage only twice. The first time was when it required Utah to ban polygamy as a condition for joining the Union—and note that this ruling was issued *before* Utah became a state. The second time was in 1967, when the Supreme Court, in *Loving v. Virginia*, struck down sixteen states' bans on interracial marriage. Here the Court said not that marriage should be defined by the federal government but only that states could not define marriage in ways that violated core constitutional rights. On the one occasion when Congress directly addressed same-sex marriage, in the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, it decreed that the federal government would not recognize same-sex marriages but took care not to impose that rule on the states.

Marriage laws (and, of course, divorce laws) continue to be established by the states. They differ on many points, from age of consent to who may marry whom. In Arizona, for example, first cousins are allowed to marry only if both are

sixty-five or older or the couple can prove to a judge "that one of the cousins is unable to reproduce." (So much for the idea that marriage is about procreation.) Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, the Constitution does not require states to recognize one another's marriages. The Full Faith and Credit clause (Article IV, Section 1) does require states to honor one another's public acts and judgments. But in 1939 and again in 1988 the Supreme Court ruled that the clause does not compel a state "to substitute the statutes of other states for its own statutes dealing with a subject matter concerning which it is competent to legislate." Dale Carpenter, a law professor at the University of Minnesota, notes that the Full Faith and Credit clause "has never been interpreted to mean that every state must recognize every marriage performed in every other state." He writes, "Each state may refuse to recognize a marriage performed in another state if that marriage would violate the state's public policy." If Delaware, for example, decided to lower its age of consent to ten, no other state would be required to regard a ten-year-old as legally married. The public-policy exception, as it is called, is only common sense. If each state could legislate for all the rest, American-style federalism would be at an end.

Why, then, do the states all recognize one another's marriages? Because they choose to. Before the gay-marriage controversy arose, the country enjoyed a general consensus on the terms of marriage. Interstate differences were so small that states saw no need to split hairs, and mutual recognition was a big convenience. The issue of gay marriage, of course, changes the picture, by asking states to reconsider an accepted boundary of marriage. This is just the sort of controversy in which the Founders imagined that individual states could and often should go their separate ways.

Paradoxically, the gay left and the antigay right have found themselves working together against the center. They agree on little else, but where marriage is concerned, they both want the federal government to take over.

To many gay people, anything less than nationwide recognition of same-sex marriage seems both unjust and impractical. "Wait a minute," a gay person might protest. "How is this supposed to work? I get married in Maryland (say), but every time I cross the border into Virginia during my morning commute, I'm single? Am I married or not? Portability is one of the things that make marriage different from civil union. If it isn't portable, it isn't really marriage; it's second-class citizenship. Obviously, as soon as same-sex marriage is approved in any one state, we're going to sue in federal court to have it recognized in all the others."

"Exactly!" a conservative might reply. "Gay activists have no intention of settling for marriage in just one or two states. They will keep suing until they find some activist federal judge—and there are plenty—who agrees with them. Public-policy exception and Defense of Marriage Act notwithstanding, the courts, not least the Supreme Court, do as they

please, and lately they have signed on to the gay cultural agenda. Besides, deciding on a state-by-state basis *is* impractical; the gay activists are right about that. The sheer inconvenience of dealing with couples who went in and out of matrimony every time they crossed state lines would drive states to the lowest common denominator, and gay marriages would wind up being recognized everywhere."

Neither of the arguments I have just sketched is without merit. But both sides are asking the country to presume that the Founders were wrong and to foreclose the possibility that seems the most likely to succeed. Both sides want something life doesn't usually offer—a guarantee. Gay-marriage supporters want a guarantee of full legal equality, and gay-marriage opponents want a guarantee that same-sex marriage will never happen at all. I can't offer any guarantees. But I can offer some reassurance.

Is a state-by-state approach impractical and unsustainable? Possibly, but the time to deal with any problems is if and when they arise. Going in, there is no reason to expect any great difficulty. There are many precedents for state-by-state action. The country currently operates under a tangle of different state banking laws. As any banker will tell you, the lack of uniformity has made interstate banking more difficult. But we do have interstate banks. Bankers long ago got used to meeting different requirements in different states. Similarly, car manufacturers have had to deal with zero-emission rules in California and a few other states. Contract law, property law, and criminal law all vary significantly from state to state. Variety is the point of federalism. Uniform national policies may be convenient, but they risk sticking us with the same wrong approach everywhere.

My guess is that if one or two states allowed gay marriage, a confusing transitional period, while state courts and legislatures worked out what to do, would quickly lead in all but a few places to routines that everyone would soon take for granted. If New Jersey adopted gay marriage, for instance, New York would have a number of options. It might refuse to recognize the marriages. It might recognize them. It might honor only certain aspects of them—say, medical power of attorney, or inheritance and tenancy rights. A state with a civil-union or domestic-partner law might automatically confer that law's benefits on any gay couple who got married in New Jersey. My fairly confident expectation is that initially most states would reject out-of-state gay marriages (as, indeed, most states have pre-emptively done), but a handful would fully accept them, and others would choose an intermediate option.

For married gay couples, this variation would be a real nuisance. If my partner and I got married in Maryland, we would need to be aware of differences in marriage laws and make arrangements—medical power of attorney, a will, and so on—for whenever we were out of state. Pesky and, yes, unfair (or at least unequal). And outside Maryland the line between being married and not being married would be

blurred. In Virginia, people who saw my wedding band would be unsure whether I was "really married" or just "Maryland married."

Even so, people in Virginia who learned that I was "Maryland married" would know I had made the strongest possible commitment in my home state, and thus in the eyes of my community and its law. They would know I had gone beyond cohabitation or even domestic partnership. As a Jew, I may not recognize the spiritual authority of a Catholic priest, but I do recognize and respect the special commitment he has made to his faith and his community. In much the same way, even out-of-state gay marriages would command a significant degree of respect.

If you are starving, one or two slices of bread may not be as good as a loaf—but it is far better than no bread at all. The damage that exclusion from marriage has done to gay lives and gay culture comes not just from being unable to marry right now and right here but from knowing the law forbids us ever to marry at all. The first time a state adopted same-sex marriage, gay life would change forever. The full benefits would come only when same-sex marriage was legal everywhere. But gay people's lives would improve with the first state's announcement that in *this* community, marriage is open to everyone.

Building consensus takes time. The nationwide imposition of same-sex marriage by a federal court might discredit both gay marriage and the courts, and the public rancor it unleashed might be at least as intense as that surrounding abortion. My confidence in the public's decency and in its unfailing, if sometimes slow-acting, commitment to liberal principles is robust. For me personally, the pace set by a state-by-state approach would be too slow. It would be far from ideal. But it would be something much more important than ideal: it would be right.

Would a state-by-state approach inevitably lead to a nationwide court mandate anyway? Many conservatives fear that the answer is yes, and they want a federal constitutional amendment to head off the courts—an amendment banning gay marriage nationwide. These days it is a fact of life that someone will sue over anything, that some court will hear any lawsuit, and that there is no telling what a court might do. Still, I think that conservatives' fears on this score are unfounded.

Remember, all precedent leaves marriage to the states. All precedent supports the public-policy exception. The Constitution gives Congress a voice in determining which of one another's laws states must recognize, and Congress has spoken clearly: the Defense of Marriage Act explicitly decrees that no state must recognize any other state's same-sex marriages. In order to mandate interstate recognition of gay marriages, a court would thus need to burn through three different firewalls—a tall order, even for an activist court. The current Supreme Court, moreover, has proved particularly fierce in resisting federal incursions into states' rights. We typically reserve constitutional prohibitions for imminent threats to liberty,

justice, or popular sovereignty. If we are going to get into the business of constitutionally banning anything that someone imagines the Supreme Court might one day mandate, we will need a Constitution the size of the Manhattan phone book.

Social conservatives have lost one cultural battle after another in the past five decades: over divorce, abortion, pornography, gambling, school prayer, homosexuality. They have seen that every federal takeover of state and local powers comes with strings attached. They have learned all too well the power of centralization to marginalize moral dissenters—including religious ones. And yet they are willing to risk federal intervention in matrimony. Why?

Not, I suspect, because they fear gay marriage would fail. Rather, because they fear it would succeed.

One of the conservative arguments against gay marriage is particularly revealing: the contention that even if federal courts don't decide the matter on a national level, convenience will cause gay marriage to spread from state to state. As noted, I don't believe questions of convenience would force the issue either way. But let me make a deeper point here.

States recognized one another's divorce reforms in the 1960s and 1970s without giving the matter much thought (which was too bad). But the likelihood that they would recognize another state's same-sex marriages without serious debate is just about zero, especially at first: the issue is simply too controversial. As time went on, states without gay mar-

Let the states try same-sex marriage individually, if and when they are inclined to do so. A decentralized approach is in keeping with the country's most venerable legal traditions.

riage might get used to the idea. They might begin to wave through other states' same-sex marriages as a convenience for all concerned. If that happened, however, it could only be because gay marriage had not turned out to be a disaster. It might even be because gay marriage was working pretty well. This would not be contagion. It would be evolution—a sensible response to a successful experiment. Try something here or there. If it works, let it spread. If it fails, let it fade.

The opponents of gay marriage want to prevent the experiment altogether. If you care about finding the best way forward for gay people and for society in a changing world, that posture is hard to justify. One rationale goes something like this: "Gay marriage is so certain to be a calamity that even the smallest trial anywhere should be banned." To me, that line of argument smacks more of hysteria than of rational

thought. In the 1980s and early 1990s some liberals were sure that reforming the welfare system to emphasize work would put millions of children out on the street. Even trying welfare reform, they said, was irresponsible. Fortunately, the states didn't listen. They experimented—responsibly. The results were positive enough to spark a successful national reform.

Another objection cites not certain catastrophe but insidious decay. A conservative once said to me, "Changes in complicated institutions like marriage take years to work their way through society. They are often subtle. Social scientists will argue until the cows come home about the positive and negative effects of gay marriage. So states might adopt it before they fully understood the harm it did."

Actually, you can usually tell pretty quickly what effects a major policy change is having—at least you can get a general idea. States knew quite soon that welfare reforms were working better than the old program. That's why the idea caught on. If same-sex marriage is going to cause problems, some of them should be apparent within a few years of its legalization.

And notice how the terms of the discussion have shifted. Now the anticipated problem is not sudden, catastrophic social harm but subtle, slow damage. Well, there might be subtle and slow social benefits, too. But more important, there would be one large and immediate benefit: *the benefit for gay people of being able to get married*. If we are going to exclude a segment of the population from arguably the most important of all civic institutions, we need to be certain that the group's participation would cause severe disruptions. If we are going to put the burden on gay people to prove that same-sex marriage would never cause even any minor difficulty, then we are assuming that *any* cost to heterosexuals, however small, outweighs *every* benefit to homosexuals, however large. That gay people's welfare counts should, of course, be obvious and inarguable; but to some it is not.

I expect same-sex marriage to have many subtle ramifications—many of them good not just for gay people but for marriage. Same-sex marriage would dramatically reaffirm the country's preference for marriage as the gold standard for committed relationships. Of course there might be harmful and neutral effects as well. I don't expect that social science would be able to sort them all out. But the fact that the world is complicated is the very reason to run the experiment. We can never know for sure what the effects of any public policy will be, so we conduct a limited experiment if possible, and then decide how to proceed on the basis of necessarily imperfect information.

If conservatives genuinely oppose same-sex marriage because they fear it would harm straight marriage, they should be willing to let states that want to try gay marriage do so. If, on the other hand, conservatives oppose same-sex marriage because they believe that it is immoral and wrong by definition, fine—but let them have the honesty to acknowledge that they are not fighting for the good of marriage so much as they are using marriage as a weapon in their fight against gays. ▀



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ROYAL PAIN

Further adventures of Rick Renard. A short story

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Illustration by Paul Cox

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It had been one of those weeks. Monday I got the news that I would not be landing the juicy new account representing the Emirate of Matar. Matar was trying to improve its image in the United States, which needed some buffing because six of its citizens had been apprehended trying to set off that radioactive device in the New York subway. That was Monday.

Wednesday I arrived in the office to the marvelous news that a pilot for an airline I represent had tried to fly a jumbo jet from Chicago to Paris while drunk. The air-traffic controllers ordered him back to the gate after he started singing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" as the plane taxied for takeoff. I issued a statement highlighting the fact that the co-pilot was a Mormon and would have been able to land the plane safely. In public relations you live with the reality that not every disaster can be made to look like a misunderstood triumph.

So I wasn't in an excellent mood when my secretary told me there was someone with a pronounced English accent on the phone who wouldn't give his name but was "most insistent" that he speak with me. Frankly, I almost didn't take the call. I don't want to give the impression that I'm one of those snooty types who stand on ceremony. On the contrary. Ask around and they'll tell you that Renard Strategic Communications is a "people" firm. To us, a client is not just a source of endless billable hours (though he is also that) but a soul in need, whether it's a soul who has just been charged with insider trading or one whose product has poisoned some watershed and made an entire species extinct (usually some type of frog that really no one aside from biologists with too much time on their hands is going to miss). Anyway, I took the call.

The accent identified itself as a Lord Sir Knatchbull Fogg-Smythers. Hard not to feel a bit inadequate after that. Still, I managed to make "Rick Renard" sound like it has passed down through the generations from the first Rick Renard, Richard le Renard, who performed an incredibly valiant deed during some twelfth-century battle. We're not

clear on the details, but apparently he was quite a guy.

"I'm calling on rather a delicate matter," he said.

"Mr. Figg-Smothers," I said, "Smogg-Fithers ..." Those hyphenated British names can be murder if you're a bit dyslexic.

"Fogg-Smythers," he said, frosting my phone with a coat of ice.

"How may I be of assistance, Sir Lord?" I said.

"Your name has come up. I'm calling by way of preliminary enquiry to see if you might come over to London. I believe you will find it quite worth your while."

"May I ask, Lord Sir, what this concerns?"

"The survival of the British monarchy."

You can't just say "I guess I could squeeze you in next Wednesday between three and four." I said I could be there tomorrow. He then asked if I would be flying "privately or commercially." Before I knew it, I was telling him that—"of course"—I would be flying in "my own plane," though the closest I've ever come to that was a balsa-wood glider when I was eleven.

Sir Lord didn't sound the least bit impressed. He just sniffed, "Much easier all round," as though I'd spared him the indignity of having someone meet me at the baggage claim. He said to have my pilot land at Brightfarthing RAF Base, in Wallowshire. "I'll arrange it so they don't shoot you down."

I hung up thinking, *Well done, Renard—you've just spent \$25,000 of your own money trying to impress someone named Knatchbull.*

I summoned LaMoyne. LaMoyne is my executive assistant. I gloomily instructed him to arrange for the cheapest fractional-ownership jet he could find that stood a sporting chance of making it from here to England. When I told him who'd summoned me, his eyes bugged out of their sockets and his bow tie twirled like a pinwheel.

"The Lord Sir Knatchbull Fogg-Smythers?" he gasped.

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"No, the other Lord Sir Knatchbull Fogg-Smythers. Who the hell is he, anyway? He sounds like he sat on his sword at some coronation ceremony and never had it removed."

His voice dropped to a whisper. "He's the private secretary to the *Prince of Wales*."

"Well, whoop-de-do," I said, still fuming over the plane.

LaMoyne reads that British magazine *Hello!*, the one that chronicles royal happenings like they were Second Comings. One issue I saw open on his desk had a twelve-page color spread under the headline "THE COUNTESS OF PUDDINGTON SPENDS AN EXHILARATING AFTERNOON JUDGING HENS AT AN AGRICULTURAL FAIR AND AFTERWARD ENJOYS TEA WITH HER COUSIN THE MARCHIONESS OF WOOLHAMPTON AT HER 152-ROOM ANCESTRAL HOME, CLAND MANOR."

I could hardly put it down. LaMoyne can't get enough of this sort of stuff. He memorizes royal-family trees. He can tell you how the King of Romania's uncle was related to

way over. Needless to say, he was beside himself with excitement to be coming along. When, that evening, we boarded the jet, a hideously expensive six-seater that would have to put down in Iceland to refuel, he had three suitcases with him.

"Those are going to cost me an extra thousand dollars in fuel."

"They're not for me," he said. "They're for you." He'd apparently gone out and bought me a trousseau.

"What's that?" I pointed to a white box with a see-through lid.

"It's a boutonniere," he said.

"LaMoyne, I'm not going to a prom, for God's sake."

"They notice these things. Trust me."

LaMoyne briefed me on royal matters as we flew over Newfoundland. I was getting to know as much about the House of Windsor as your average *Hello!* reader. I even felt some sympathy for the Prince of Wales.

It's in some ways an aimless existence. The Prince's only job, really, is to become King when his mother dies. But the women in his family live longer than Galápagos tortoises.

Queen Victoria's aunt and what kind of hemophilia he had. LaMoyne grew up in Indiana. His father managed a cement factory; his mother taught high school English. People like LaMoyne tend to leave Indiana as soon as they attain legal age, and head west or east until they reach the continental shelf. I suppose you can't blame them.

I told him what the subject of the meeting with Lord Sir was. He sniffed, "The monarchy could use some saving."

I wasn't really up on the latest royal catastrophe. There seemed to be at least one a week. Something was always going wrong with that dynasty. I read somewhere that a Hungarian monk two centuries ago put a curse on it. You're not off to a good start as a dynasty when you have monks putting curses on you unto the tenth generation.

While not a royal-watcher myself, I was aware that the Prince of Wales had recently shot a beater accidentally during a driven-pheasant shoot. The man survived, and as soon as he could walk, or limp, out of the emergency room, he made a beeline for the nearest tabloid newspaper, where he sold a Homeric account of the peppering of his hind-quarters for £200,000. (Headline: "DOES HE LOOK LIKE A BLOODY PHEASANT, SIR?") If I'd been handling His Royal Highness's affairs at the time, I'd have put out the word that the man practically hurled himself in front of the Prince so that he could cash in. Sometimes, in PR, you have to take off the old gloves.

I told LaMoyne he could brief me on royalty on the

It can't be that bad a life. He's richer than most Arab sheikhs. He has someone on his palace staff who irons the five-pound notes he puts in the Sunday collection plate—this being the only money he spends, since London headwaiters apparently know not to present him with the check. He also has someone on staff to hold the specimen cup for him while he's providing royal urine samples. By most stan-

dards this would qualify as the Good Life.

On the other hand, it's in some ways an aimless existence. His only job, really, is to become King when his mother dies. But the women in his family live longer than Galápagos tortoises. At this rate he won't be King until he's so old he'll be getting up five times in the middle of the night to provide royal specimens. Not much fun for the guy who has to hold the cup. Maybe he gets hardship pay.

HRH's track record is, frankly, mixed. There was the disastrous marriage, the taped telephone conversation with his mistress in which he told her he wanted to be reincarnated as her—well, I'm sure you heard all about it. Must have been fun to read that in his morning newspaper. These moments of glory were followed by an endless series of serve-and-tell memoirs by palace butlers, footmen, grooms, garbage men. You wonder why everyone in England doesn't apply to work in the palace. The latest memoir included the news that the dead Princess was convinced the Prince was underneath her car at night, draining the brake fluid. One third of the British people believed it, apparently. No wonder HRH's approval rating was in the single digits. Most British people didn't even want him to become King; they couldn't wait for the crown to go to his twenty-one-year-old son. You can be 100 percent American—as I certainly am—and still feel a bit sorry for a constipated monarch who's losing a popularity contest to his kid and whose mother is the Energizer Bunny of queens.

By the time we landed at Brightfarthing, LaMoyne had got me up to speed. I could tell you how many kids George V had and which of them stuttered. His son George VI had such a problem that they had a doctor standing by at his coronation with a hypodermic needle full of amphetamines, ready to stick him if he stalled at “I, G-g-g-g-g.” Poor guy. Apparently he never even wanted to be King, but his brother—that would be Edward VIII—fell in love with Mrs. Simpson, who may or may not have been a hermaphrodite. And I thought my family was odd.

“Don’t shake hands,” LaMoyne said. “They hate touching. They think it’s vulgar and American. And don’t introduce yourself by name. Just nod slightly and act as though you’d rather be somewhere else. If they offer you something to drink, ask for a medium sherry and take *teensy* sips.”

“Can I blow my nose on the drapes? I’m not some barbarian from the steppes, damnit.”

LaMoyne’s briefing stood me in good stead during the interview with Lord Sir Knatchbull Fogg-Smythers. He received me—one is *received*—in his study at Wheatlers, the Prince’s estate near Least Cudding. I don’t know where they get the names.

He extended his hand. Naturally, I withheld mine and just smiled thinly. He seemed relieved not to have to touch me.

“His Royal Highness has concluded that the time has come to take a more aggressive stance with respect to press relations,” he said.

“Um,” I said. I found during my time in the Prince’s employ that you can get through most conversations in England by just saying “Um.” They prefer to do all the talking anyway, and really don’t care what you think. Every so often you throw in a frown to show that you haven’t had so many Botox injections that you can no longer register facial expressions.

“Of course,” he said, “we don’t think it would be judicious to be seen to be employing a *foreign* firm for this sort of thing. So you would be functioning from rather *behind* the arras, as it were.” He chuckled dryly.

“Arras” is not a word that comes up every day at Renard Strategic Communications, but I caught Sir Lord’s drift. I later learned from LaMoyne that it’s some kind of curtain that Shakespeare’s characters are always running their swords through—an Elizabethan piñata. As it were.

At this point the door opened, and in walked HRH in the flesh, looking like he’d just spent an exhilarating morning on the moors shooting beaters.

He couldn’t have been more gracious. He thanked me for coming all this way, hoped they were taking good care of me—must be jolly jet-lagged, and what about this rotten English weather? LaMoyne had told me, “If you meet him, don’t *say* anything to him. You’re not supposed to initiate conversation.” He was adamant about it.

So I stood there while the Prince went on about nothing in particular. Finally he stopped and stared at me. I wondered if he was waiting for me to unzip the royal fly

and hold out a cup. Then he murmured something to Lord Sir, who frowned, and HRH suggested that the two of us “go for a tromp.”

I blurted, “As long as you don’t bring a shotgun.”

Lord Sir looked like he was going to shoot me himself, but HRH just laughed politely and said they had some medieval armor that I could wear if that would make me feel safer. Awfully sporting of the man. I was starting to like him. This isn’t always the case with my clients, who have included some pretty fruity characters, as they say in England.

While we tromped, HRH told me that it had been his idea to hire me. He’d read about my effort to get an American cardinal elected Pope and the celebrity pro-am golf tournament I’d staged in North Korea. He said I was “rum.”

He was painfully aware of his own bad press. “I just can’t seem to put a foot right,” he said. “And now they all want me to abdicate—before I’ve even sat on the throne.” My heart went out to the man. He said, “Do you know why I wanted to talk to you out here, alone? They listen in. The gray men. With tape recorders. It’s a *nightmare*.”

A look of pain came over his face. “That ghastly business with the cell phones.” Suddenly I saw him not as the future King of England but as just a fellow human being who felt not particularly great at having had his wish to be reincarnated as his mistress’s Tampax broadcast to the world. I myself have not entertained that particular fantasy, but if I had, I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t want to read about it in *USA Today*.

“I’ve come to wonder if they don’t have it in for me,” he said. He stood there on the moor, looking like Heathcliff only not as handsome and with bigger ears. “It’s almost as if they want me to fail.”

“Sir,” I said, the time having come to say something more than “Um,” “with all due respect, we need to take the bull by the horns. You’ve been playing defense. It’s time to kick ass.”

You’re probably not supposed to use words like that with royals. But when I looked over at him, he was chewing his lower lip thoughtfully, and I detected a smile on the part of his mouth he wasn’t chewing.

“Um,” he said. Historically, you have to be careful interpreting royal gestures, or before you know it you’re slicing up archbishops in the cathedral. But it sounded like he was giving me the green light.

As we tromped back to Wheatlers through the fog, he brought up the fact that his grandmother had lived to the age of 101, and his great-grandmother Queen Mary to the age of eighty-five, and his great-great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria to the age of eighty-two. He didn’t sound thrilled by this longevity.

“Long live the Queen and all that,” he sighed, “but the people might be a bit more excited by the idea of Charles III if he didn’t look like an Egyptian mummy when he assumed the throne. Don’t you think?”

I said to myself, *Tread carefully, Renard*. We were being

trailed at a distance by two of his Special Branch bodyguards. What with all the taping going on, who knew if they had long-range parabolic microphones under their anoraks. "PRINCE HIRES YANK HIT MAN TO 'MURDER' QUEEN."

"Have you discussed with your dear mother," I said, sounding like some brown-nosing courtier, "her thoughts with respect to, um, abdication?"

"Her Majesty has made her views on that subject abundantly clear," he said with a grunt. "*Au même temps*," he went on, "were she to become a figure of ridicule, as I have been, then her views might moderate."

He gave me a sly look, like Henry II asking the staff, "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?"

"I've come to wonder if they don't have it in for me," HRH said. He stood there on the moor, looking like Heathcliff only not as handsome and with bigger ears.

"We have the same situation with my mother," I said, laughing. "We've been trying to get her to move into an assisted-living home, but she won't budge."

HRH looked at me. "Well, hardly."

As his great-great-grandmother would have said, "We are not amused."

Before we got back to Wbeaters, he said, "There's someone I'll put at your disposal. Someone I trust, with very good connections. She's rather a bit of all right." You need a glossary with Brits.

LaMoyné was standing in the gravel driveway, clearly hoping to catch a glimpse of HRH. He swooned when we walked up. I know I saw LaMoyné *curtsy*, though he denies it.

"What the hell was it, then?" I said to him in the plane as we flew back across the Atlantic at a cost of \$18 per mile.

"My knee. Sometimes it locks. I'd been standing there for hours."

"Whatever," I said. "Well, your idol His Royal Highness wants me to take down his mother."

"Oh, dear," LaMoyné said.

We were back in England ten days later—by commercial carrier—and set up shop in a suite of offices a discreet distance from Pituitary House, HRH's London residence.

Lord Sir sent over a couple of Oxbridge-type dons to educate me on the history of Princes of Wales. Pretty rich stuff. What I was after was which PoWs were successes and which ones had tanked. The dons kept bleating, "But Mr. Renard, they didn't *take* polls in the eighteenth century." I said, "Well, maybe if they had, you wouldn't have lost America and India."

The second day a very attractive woman in her mid-thirties showed up with skin like porcelain and a figure like one of those Greek statues in the British Museum. Long eyelashes, too, which I have personally always been a sucker for.

"Serena Tompkins," she said. "I believe you're expecting me. Mr. Fitzwater sent me?"

"Fitzwater" was our code name for HRH. She'd been one of his Special Branch bodyguards, and had done a lot of the advance work for his foreign trips. She was plugged in to MI5 and MI6 (their version of our FBI and CIA). She was now a private security consultant. She seemed loyal to HRH and "livid"—a word she used a lot—over his treatment at the hands of Fleet Street "hacks and parasites." She

seemed so loyal to and admiring of him, in fact, that the thought did cross my mind that it might be more than your standard monarch-subject relationship.

"I'm a bit nervous about all this. Your being American. Rather awkward if it got out."

"You know, ma'am," I said a little wearily, "it's impressive how one British person can make the word 'American' sound more damning than a crowd of Middle Easterners screaming 'Great Satan.' What is it about us that bugs you so? Aside from the fact that we're overweight, vulgar, arrogant, and ignorant?"

"Sorry. Didn't mean to start off on the wrong foot."

"No big deal. I'll be the crass American, you be the tight-assed Brit. So who's been taping our Mr. Fitzwater and leaking stuff to the tabs? I don't get it. He's the Prince of Wales and his own government is taping his phone calls to his squeeze? Is this normal in a monarchy? Do they do this in Belgium and Denmark?"

"We don't know for sure who did the taping," she said. "It is possible the security services were involved."

"Well, you work on that. I'll concentrate on relaunching the product."

"He's not some new brand of cereal," she said.

"Assuming it was MI5 or 6, what is it about him they don't like? I know he's got old-fashioned ideas about city planning. Was it that speech he gave in Paris, where he came out against the British position on GATT, in favor of French farmers? That wasn't very popular, as I recall."

"It caused a huge stir. But I can't imagine the government would have retaliated with such vehemence."

"He could have started a trade war and screwed up the entire world economy. What was he thinking?"

"He's a very intelligent man, but sometimes he goes at things instinctively. From the heart."

"Well, no more speeches for our boy in favor of French farmers. I'll tell Lord Sir Knatchbull. Speaking of which—is he on the level?"

"On the level? Do you mean a Mason?"

"No. Is he on our side?"

"Of course. He was at Gordonstoun with the Prince."

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"Does that mean they had sex? I know how it is in English schools."

"Really, Mr. Renard. I—haven't the slightest idea. I should very much doubt it."

"Well, let's check his phone records for the past, say, ten years. See if he's been yakking it up with Fleet Street or MI5 or 6."

"That's rather a tall order, Mr. Renard. To say nothing of being highly illegal."

"Well, then, you'd *rather* better get going. *Oughtn't* you, Ms. Tompkins?"

She huffed out of my office (the British are very good at the huffy exit), practically knocking over LaMoyne, who'd been pouring sherry into the dons and grilling them on fourteenth-century attitudes toward Princes of Wales.

The next two weeks—fortnight, as the British would say—were a period of intense activity. We did focus groups up and down the sceptered isle, from way up in York, where you can barely understand what the hell they're saying, down to Kent, where they are slightly more

SEESAWS

The bigger the tomb, the smaller the man.
The weaker the case, the thicker the brief.
The deeper the pain, the older the wound.
The graver the loss, the drier the tears.

The truer the shot, the slower the aim.
The quicker the kiss, the sweeter the taste.
The broader the crime, the vaguer the guilt.
The louder the price, the cheaper the ring.

The steeper the climb, the sheerer the slide.
The higher the odds, the shrewder the bet.
The rarer the chance, the blinder the risk.
The colder the snow, the greener the spring.

The braver the bull, the wiser the cape.
The shorter the joke, the surer the laugh.
The sadder the tale, the dearer the joy.
The longer you live, the fewer your years.

—SAMUEL HAZO

Samuel Hazo served for ten years as the first state poet of Pennsylvania. His most recent collection is Just Once: New and Previous Poems (2002).

intelligible. I wanted a broad cross-section of the population, but the idea of rustling me up some nobles gave Lord Sir a case of shingles. He was convinced that it would leak to the press. But I held firm, and in the end I got a couple of old duchesses and something called a viscount (you don't pronounce the *s*, which I learned by putting my foot in my mouth) behind the one-way mirror. LaMoyne wired them up for galvanic skin responses and breathing.

"Will it hurt?"

"Not at all, Your Grace," LaMoyne said. He missed his true calling, LaMoyne. He should have been a butler. "It's simply to measure your response to the questions."

"How very exciting."

We focused more than 2,000 people, from every walk of British life: mine workers, gamekeepers, curry chefs, soccer hooligans, shoe bombers, a couple of cross-dressing members of Parliament, a retired army colonel, punk rockers, poachers, an IRA kneecapper, a bobby (policeman), a fishmonger, a gaol guard, a Gurkha, junkies, footmen, a lot of transplanted Arabs—one of whom claimed to own Harrods, the big store, and kept insisting that my client had ordered MI6 to kill his ex-wife. Good thing he didn't know what I was up to. Anyway, very interesting, the Brits. I have to say, a bit more varied than your average Iowa or Florida focus group. I came away with quite an appreciation for the country, though I don't think I'd want to get seriously sick there, to judge from the stories I heard about their National Health. No wonder it's free of charge. You have to schedule—or, as they would say, *shed-yule*—your serious illnesses months in advance, and when you get there, the CAT-scan machine has an OUT OF SERVICE sign on it. At any rate, by the end we had a very good statistical sample. I don't like shooting from the hip when I'm promoting monarchy.

LaMoyne and I pulled consecutive all-nighters getting it together for our PowerPoint presentation to HRH. Lord Sir wanted us to rehearse it with him first, but I nixed that. I didn't want him telling me, "You can't tell His Royal Highness that."

In fact, I didn't even want him to hear what I had to tell HRH. If you've got tough news for the client, there's no point sugarcoating. One of my previous clients was the manufacturer of the guidance system on that geosynchronous (in the end, not so geosynchronous) three-ton satellite that landed on Kansas City. It fell to me to break the news to the chairman of the company, a decent enough guy, that the latest Gallup poll showed he was now the most hated person in America. But he needed to hear that.

HRH wasn't going to like a lot of what was in my presentation. But I had a plan. If you have to tell a client that his approval ratings are in the basement, it's always better if you can hand him a flashlight and point him toward the stairs.

I called Lord Sir and told him that I was ready to go. And that I wanted to give it to HRH straight up and alone, just the two of us. He didn't like that idea at all. He insisted

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ALGER

that he be present—said it was a point of “protocol.” They get very nervous, courtiers, if you want to spend some quality time alone with the *fromage*.

I called Ms. Tompkins, who said she was in the bowels of some government building looking up phone records. I told her to get a message through to Mr. Fitzwater, instructing him to ask to speak to me alone after the presentation, if possible out of earshot of any “gray men.”

“It all sounds rather conspiratorial,” she said. “But I’ll pass it along.”

Lord Sir and HRH didn’t say a word while I walked them through my presentation. It was not easy telling the heir to the throne that after thirty-five years of hard work—604 public appearances in the previous year alone—most of his subjects thought that he had murdered his wife and wanted to be reincarnated as a tampon. I told him we were going to have to confront the tampon business. One maker of tampons in Singapore was using his face on its billboards next to the slogan “In my next life, I want to be one of these!” The British Foreign Office was making an official stink about it, but all that did was keep it in the newspapers. And the brand was now the No. 1 seller in the Far East. Go figure.

I went over the results of the focus group in quick, broad strokes. The good news was that he was doing pretty well in Wiltshire and Stiltonshire among sixty-to-seventy-

HRH wasn’t going to like my presentation. But I had a plan. If a client’s ratings are in the basement, it’s always better if you can hand him a flashlight and point him toward the stairs.

nine-year-olds. I wrapped it up by saying I was working on a media plan.

Lord Sir said, “Is that *all*?” with the air of a disappointed headmaster.

“Well,” I said, catching HRH’s eye, “for now.”

“I must say, Mr. Renard, you haven’t told us anything we didn’t already know.”

I sort of hemmed and hawed, at which point HRH said he wanted to talk to me alone. Lord Sir didn’t seem at all pleased by that, but there wasn’t much he could do about it. It’s one of the advantages of being a Prince: you get to dismiss people. In the old days, in fact, they had to walk backward.

When we were alone, I hit him with my big idea. HRH may talk to his rosebushes and have some fruity ideas about international trade, but the man knows his history, and he got my drift right away. He told me to get right to work.

I urged him to keep it to himself, and for God’s sake—

sir—not to discuss it on the cell phone with the mistress. He said not to worry, he’d learned that lesson.

Then he asked me if I had any ideas about how to get the Queen to step down. I said let’s start with this first and *then* start planting stories in the press about how his mother was having orgies with the postilions.

I called the director Reg Gibbins, reaching him in his home town of Sydney, Australia. I had to do some fancy talking to get past his guard dogs, but when you say you’re calling on behalf of HRH, the doors tend to swing open.

Reg Gibbins, I don’t need to explain, is the award-winning Australian director who was adapting Alistair Squinch novels about the British navy during the Napoleonic wars. The second movie in the series, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash*, was in pre-production. (It ended up being titled *Topgallants and Trysails*.)

I had had LaMoyne speed-read the novels, all twenty-one of them. He said there was more than enough room in the basic story line to add the part I had in mind. It wouldn’t have to be a huge speaking part, so long as HRH got to skewer French sailors with a saber.

The bottom line of my extensive research with the Oxbridge dons and the focus groups was that the English people value one quality above all else in their monarchs: killing the French.

One of the most successful early Princes of Wales was Edward, the Black Prince (great title), who in the year 1356, at the Battle of Poitiers, cut the army of the French King John II to ribbons, and into the bargain took a bunch of Parisian aristos back to England as hostages. Man, those were the days! All that remained of that era in England was the quality of health care.

I was convinced that when British audiences saw HRH up there on the big screen shouting “Death to Bonaparte!” and running the Frogs through like cocktail olives, they’d leap to their feet and start singing “God Save the King.” (And, who knows, maybe even demand that the Queen abdicate, so that Charles III could get started waging war against France.) When I presented the idea to HRH, he went for it. He said he’d “crept the boards a bit” at Cambridge. I had to look that up afterward. I gather his younger brother has done a little creeping himself.

Reg Gibbins was, shall we say, surprised by my call—indeed, blown away. In fact, he hung up, figuring I was a crank. I called him back and starchily said, “Look here, my good man, I can take this to Spielberg or Disney if you’re not interested in having a live Prince of England in your next movie.” He said to jump on a plane and come on down and discuss it.

“No,” I said, “*you* jump on a plane and come up *here* and discuss it. Will you be flying privately or commercially?” I was getting the hang of this royal-summons thing.

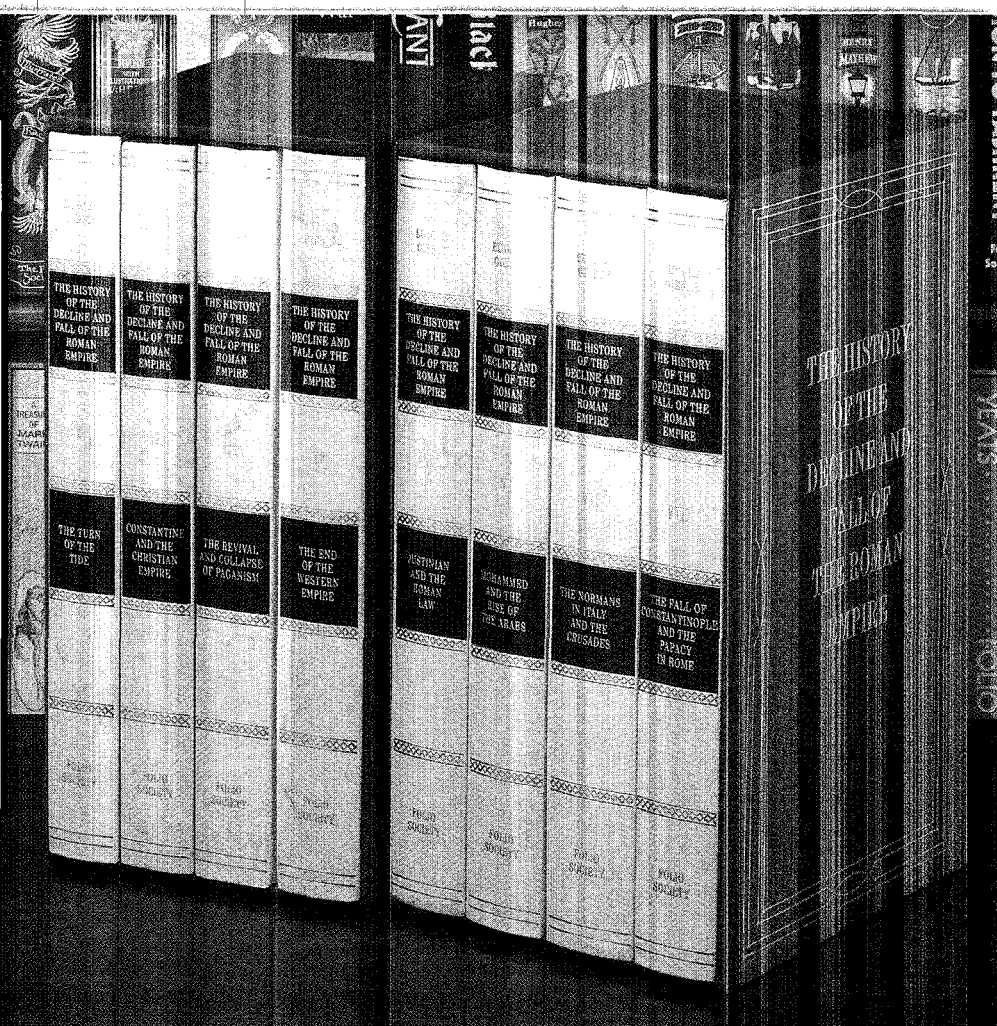
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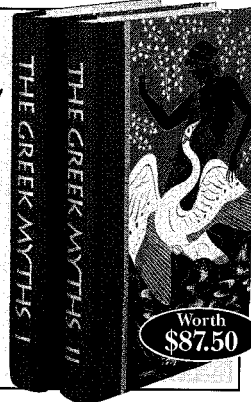
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Needless to say, he did have his own plane. I told him HRH and I would meet him at Brightfarthing, and we'd do lunch at Wheaters. He was thrilled—and why shouldn't he be? This was a pretty inspired bit of casting, if I do say so myself.

I woke up the next morning full of puissance and vinegar, as the Brits would say. Not to thump my chest, but here I was, a humble PR flack from the Colonies, about to engineer just the greatest comeback in British royal history since Prince Hal became Henry V.

I was feeling pretty good. At which point my phone rang. It was LaMoyné.

"Look out your window at the newsstand across the street," he said.

I looked out. A poster next to a stack of papers announced in large letters,

PRINCE HIRES
YANK SPIN
DOCTOR

I had chest pains. I hung up. The phone rang again. I picked it up, slightly dazed. I hadn't even had my coffee. It was the manager, saying that there was "rather"—the Brits can't seem to get through a sentence without that word—"a large group of reporters and photographers" in the lobby, "clamoring."

As a professional media wrangler, I'm accustomed to swarms of these locusts. But this was far from the norm and even further from ideal. I called Ms. Tompkins.

"Perfide Albion!" I said. (You don't get to say this very often.) I explained the situation.

"Oh, dear. Stay where you are; I'll manage something."

"Better manage a helicopter. And call Mr. Fitzwater. Who the hell leaked this?"

"I was able to insinuate myself electronically into the palace phone system. No easy feat, let me tell you. There was rather a flurry of phone chatter yesterday right after your meeting with His Royal Highness."

"What do you mean?"

"Numerous phone calls. From Fogg-Smythers's office. To various newspaper offices, I'm afraid."

"The swine! I told you."

"I'm afraid that's not the half of it. He made another call first. I can't say any more over this phone. I'll explain in person."

Just then there was a knock on my door, and it didn't sound like a maid. I looked through the peephole and counted three photographers. They must have seen my dilating pupil through the other end, because they started shouting, "Rick!" "Mr. Renard!" "Come on out, mate!" and "Be a sport!"

"Stay in your room," Serena said. "Get dressed and be ready to move. Leave your luggage. The signal will be four knocks on the door followed by two. By the way, I did tell you, didn't I?"

"What?"

"That it would be awkward, your being American."

An hour later I heard a scuffle outside my door—the pleasing sound of paparazzi being beaten about the head and shoulders. I opened the door to find a half dozen plainclothes beefeaters. Collectively they must have weighed nearly a ton.

"Mr. Renard, is it? Care to accompany us, sir?"

They hustled me down the fire stairs. Photographers kept popping out of doors, like skeletons on an amusement-park ride, and being shoved back by my scrum of protectors. We got to a basement garage. The next thing I knew, I was lying on the floor of an SUV having a blanket thrown over me to the sound of screeching tires. I've made more dignified exits in my day.

"Where are we going?" I said from underneath my blanket.

"RAF base, sir. Not too far. Can you breathe under there?"

After an hour or so of violent swerving so as to lose our press pursuers, we arrived at an air base. There were soldiers standing around with berets and machine guns.

A female voice said, "You look like you've been through it." Serena.

"You could probably use some coffee," she said. "Your plane's just finishing up being fueled." She nodded toward a C-130 cargo plane, and smiled apologetically. "Rather easier all round, we thought. Under the circumstances."

"We?"

"His Royal Highness. He said to tell you that he is most appreciative of everything you've done. This rather confirms what we've suspected. The origin of the leaks, that is."

"Which we?" I said. "I'm confused."

"We are speaking confidentially?"

"Yes." I was carsick from all the swerving and lying on the floor.

"I'm not actually in the private sector," she said. "I'm with MI7."

"MI7?"

"We were set up to oversee MI5 and MI6. All rather *sub rosa*. It was originated after the leaking of the cell-phone conversations. You can't have the security services broadcasting pillow talk between the future sovereign and his lady friends. At first we thought it might be the work of a rogue anti-monarchist element within MI5. *Au contraire*, as it turned out."

"Could you stick to English?" I said. "I've had a rough morning."

"I need your assurance that this will remain private. It's terribly sensitive information."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah."

"Sir Knatch made a call to Buckingham Palace before he loosed the dogs of Fleet Street on you. Look, this is delicate."

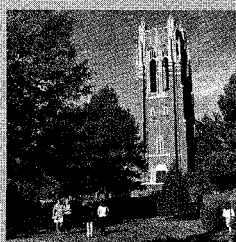
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"If one more person tells me it's delicate, I'm going to start breaking things," I said.

"He called Her Majesty."

"HRH's mother?"

"Um. It rather confirms what we'd come to suspect. She's the one behind the leaks."

"But why?"

"She thinks he's made rather a mess of things. Marrying that silly girl in the first place, then the divorce, the romantic carryings-on, nearly starting a global trade war over a few smelly French farmers. She and he have never been what you'd call close. Point is, she thinks he's a disaster and that the Windsor dynasty will collapse if he ever becomes King. She can read polls too. She wants the crown to skip a gen—to her grandson Prince William. He's enormously popular. She thinks he's just the thing to put the 'Great' back in 'Great Britain.'"

"Well, that's just swell. His own mother. What is this, the Middle Ages?"

"As monarch, one *does* have to make the hard decisions. Goes with all the gold leaf. But maybe your clever film notion will do the trick. Have them all clamoring for him to take the throne. Jolly exciting."

LUNGE WITH MARTHA

Tell me again how you raised up
in the stirrups, held on tight
with your thighs, riding the colt
in circles with me as anchor
holding the lead and spinning
on my heels. Did you canter or
trot? I can't tell the difference,
but our Arabian didn't kick
or try to throw you that day.
Could you feel strength in my back,
arms, shoulders, through the line?
I see you now bouncing in black
and white, as in a film or poem:
I, the hero, would never let go.

—JONATHAN MUSGROVE

*Jonathan Musgrove is a poet, a teacher, and
a poultry farmer who lives in Long Shop, Virginia.*

"How did you know about the movie?" I said. "The only person I told was HRH."

"Yes, of course. Well, he mentioned it to me. Said how very thrilled he was and how absolutely brilliant you are."

"Ready, Ms. Tompkins."

"Thank you, sergeant. Well, *bon voyage*, Mr. Renard. Splendid working with you. Hope we will again soon." She gave me a kiss—a peck, really—and that was that.

It's loud inside a C-130, and cold. I was not in a particularly good mood when I was deposited at an air base in Newfoundland, eight hours later. But never let it be said that Rick Renard does not go the distance for a client.

You've probably seen the movie. It's grossed over \$200 million. That being the case, you are probably also aware that the role I originally proposed to the director—that double-dealing swine—ended up being played by my client's son, for whom there is now a huge "clamor," as Serena would put it, to become King of England.

I admit it's a dramatic moment, when Prince William swings down on a rope from the rigging of HMS *Indubitable* onto the French ship, looking drop-dead gorgeous in his nineteenth-century Royal British Navy uniform, swinging his saber, firing his pistol into a mob of Frogs, and crying "Death to Bony!" They had to carry fainting teenage girls out of the movie theaters on stretchers. There hasn't been screaming like that since the Beatles.

Here is what I have been able to piece together. First, Serena was not working for MI7. There is no MI7. If this does not reflect well on Rick Renard, okay. Better you appear a chump than your client, I've always said. I still don't know exactly who Serena was working for, but I strongly suspect that she was reporting all along to Her Majesty Queen Cruella.

What I do know is that when Reg Gibbins's plane put down at Brightfarthing, a car was waiting for him, all right—but not HRH's. He was driven to Balmoral instead, where he was ushered into a room hung with a hundred antlers, and there was the Queen of England waiting for him. And who should be with her but Prince Good-Looking William, that is. Reg took one look and said, "I don't suppose *you'd* be available for the part, sir?" And the Queen, she just smiled.

Now the kid's bigger than Brad Pitt, and the latest rumor, according to *Hello!*, is that the Queen is going to step down in his favor as soon as he's got his Screen Actors Guild card.

What a disaster.

So let me be the first to admit that this did not work out as I had planned. LaMoyne is on Zolof for depression. As for my former client, I'm guessing that he is not thrilled, to gather from this invitation that has just arrived from St. James's Palace, inviting me to a driven-pheasant shoot. Under the circumstances I think I'm going to pass. ▀



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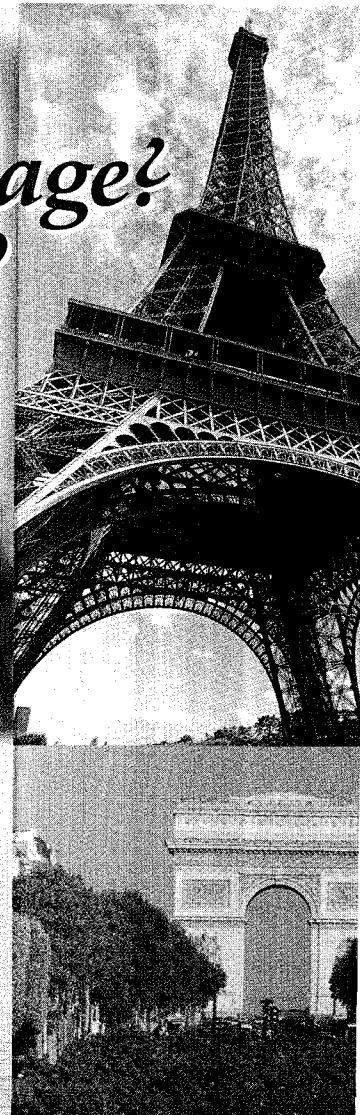
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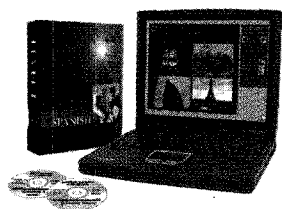
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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

Nasty, Brutish, and Short
"The Pig Who Sang to the Moon reads suspiciously like a veiled attack on meat-eating—until page three, that is, when the veil comes off."
B. R. Myers reviews the new book by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson.
 PAGE 115

Domesticated Goddess
"Would we believe in Plath's poetry as much as we do had she not followed it with suicide?" Cristina Nehring examines a host of books about Sylvia Plath.
 PAGE 120

Me and My Moguls
Autumn of the Moguls: My Misadventures With the Titans, Poseurs, and Money Guys Who Mastered and Messed Up Big Media, by Michael Wolff, reviewed by Eric Alterman
 PAGE 127

Reactionary Prophet
In his review of Reflections on the Revolution in France: Edmund Burke, edited by Frank M. Turner, Christopher Hitchens reassesses the reputation of Burke, "who employed the words 'innovation' and 'despotism' as virtual twins."
 PAGE 130

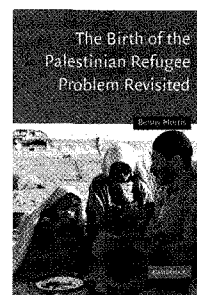
NEW & NOTEWORTHY

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

In 1949 about 700,000 fewer Palestinian Arabs lived in the area that had become the state of Israel than had lived there in 1947. Explanations of how and why that came about have fueled bitter debate for half a century, and help sustain two contending national mythologies. The creation of a refugee population that now numbers four million has nourished within the Arab world a murderous hatred for the Jewish state and helped trigger three conventional conflicts and a terrorist campaign that with varying intensity has lasted since Israel's creation, and may well prove to be the spark that ignites an apocalyptic war. In 1988, in the first edition of this book, the Israeli journalist and historian Benny Morris examined the origins of this problem. He was motivated, he writes in this thoroughly revised and enormously enlarged edition, by neither ideological nor political commitment. Rather, he "simply wanted to know what happened." Rarely has a work of history examined a complex and morally fraught event with such cool precision and utter honesty. And rarely has a scholarly book proved so unsettling to so many people. Morris's conclusions—for which he was excoriated as both a PLO supporter and a "sophisticated Zionist propagandist"—undermined the national identity of Palestinians and Israelis alike. According to the Arab version of events, the Israelis, inspired by an inherently expansionist Zionist ideology, systematically drove out the Palestinians in accordance with a master plan of what we now call ethnic cleansing. For their part, Israelis were taught that the refugees left their homes largely on orders from Arab leaders. Morris demonstrated that neither version of history was sustainable. In what was in many ways a painstaking work of military history, he showed that the Palestinians fled or were expelled from their land as a result of war, not of Zionist or Arab design, and that the reasons for and timing of their exodus varied enormously depending on place and on myriad complex social, economic, and military factors. Arabs were angered by Morris's conclusion that the refugee problem was neither monocausal nor the consequence of nefarious Zionist strategy, and that hundreds of thousands of refugees had fled "not under Jewish orders or direct coercion" but owing to a collapse of morale caused by the absence of strong leadership and of



THE BIRTH OF
THE PALESTINIAN
REFUGEE PROBLEM
REVISITED
by Benny Morris
Cambridge

a robust sense of national cohesion; and simply to avoid the line of fire (as civilians in war zones are wont to do). For their part, Israelis were dismayed by Morris's evidence that their military did clear scores of villages and expelled tens of thousands of their inhabitants. They were exercised by his calm argument that long before their country's founding, its creators embraced the notion that to make an Arab land into a Jewish state required the "transfer" of its inhabitants—volitional if possible, compulsory if necessary. They were shattered by, or furiously denied, his proof that in the war of independence, a protracted struggle for what at first was national survival, Israeli atrocities and massacres sometimes accompanied martial valor. And they contested or only grudgingly accepted his careful demonstration that regardless of what impelled the displacement of the Palestinians, from the summer of 1948 on, Israeli policy unambiguously and often brutally sought to bar their return. ("In this sense," Morris points out, "it may fairly be said that all 700,000 or so who ended up as refugees were compulsorily displaced or 'expelled.'")

This new edition—which is 640 pages, compared with the original's 380—greatly enhances the book's initial strengths, supports but modifies its earlier conclusions, and deepens its sense of ambiguity as well as its implicit pessimism. Morris is a refreshingly old-fashioned historian, who firmly believes in the value of documents (as opposed to, say, interviews conducted fifty years after the events they relate), and he has fully and inventively exploited a flood of recently declassified Israeli files, principally from intelligence and military archives (the relevant Arab archives, of course, remain closed to scholars). The evidence Morris gleans from the intelligence papers gives a richer, often day-by-day picture of the Arab communities' disintegration, in Haifa and Jaffa especially, under the pressure of uncertainty and conflict. But more important,

the military documents illuminate the muddy relationship between Israeli military operations and Palestinian flight. In case after case Morris shows that what could be construed as legitimate Israeli tactical goals—the need to secure a vital road, an exposed settlement or garrison, a border area, or the likely routes of invading Arab armies—required clearing hostile and potentially hostile forces from towns and villages and ensuring that those places not be used as future bases of enemy support. The concomitant combat or pacification efforts usually provoked Palestinian flight, and were often followed by expulsion if not. And as the war swung to the Jews' favor, the distinction between the militarily exigent and the politically desirable blurred: Israel's narrowly defensive

combat operations gave way to opportunistic efforts to secure and bolster its still extremely vulnerable geostrategic position (security might demand that Israel clear its border areas of Arab settlements, but given its size and shape, virtually everywhere could be considered a border area), and to the even more ambitious but nebulous aim of ensuring

that the emerging Jewish state's disruptive and potentially menacing Arab minority be as small as possible.

Morris has significantly elaborated his analysis of the background of this issue (whereas the first edition devoted four pages to the Zionists' idea prior to 1948 of the "transfer" of the Palestinians, the new edition gives it twenty-six pages) and, again, his findings will be unwelcome to ideologues on either side. Although some Israeli scholars challenged Morris's earlier assessment of this subject, his more detailed exposition leaves no doubt that the Zionist leadership believed it critical to buy out or drive out a large number of the Arabs living in those areas intended for Jewish statehood. But Morris doesn't see the tight relationship between such

thinking and actual Israeli policy in 1948–1949 that Arab and pro-Arab commentators assert; rather, he convincingly argues that these ideas conditioned the Jewish population and its leaders to accept the largely fortuitous displacement of Palestinians that resulted from the war. Furthermore, from his scrutiny of the newly available documents, Morris finds, on the one hand, that far more Palestinians than he had earlier maintained did in fact abandon their homes on the advice or at the behest of their leaders (who saw the propaganda value of a Palestinian exodus, feared for the safety of women and children, and sought to facilitate Palestinian and pan-Arab combat operations by removing friendly civilians from the battle). But on the other hand, the documents also reveal more Israeli atrocities: pillage was routine, rape not infrequent, and executions of POWs almost a matter of course, and civilians were massacred on some twenty occasions.

The picture that emerges from this towering and intricate history flatters neither Palestinian nor Israeli self-images, and for those interested in finding moral opprobrium, the book provides plenty of it to go around. But Morris's detractors are so enraged precisely because he approaches his story as a realist rather than as a moralist. To be sure, he places events in their moral context: he reminds readers that the conflict he chronicles took place just after the Holocaust, and he asserts that the Jews, not unreasonably, feared that military defeat would end not in displacement but in wholesale slaughter; he also shows that Arabs were correct in their thinking that the Zionist project required not merely the arrival of many Jews on Arab land but also the removal of many Arabs, and he amply demonstrates that by the time his story begins, each side could point to a history of grievous wrongs committed by the other. But he sedulously eschews judgment; and more important, he imbues his tale with a genuine sense of tragedy, for his narrative elucidates why neither side could reasonably have been expected to act, or react, differently. By rejecting the UN partition of Palestine,



the Arabs "started" the war that resulted in the Palestinians' displacement; but why wouldn't they have rejected a resolution that designated as Jewish a state that contained fully 400,000 Arabs and merely 500,000 Jews? The borders of that state were impossible to defend, however, and any responsible Israeli leader, given the opportunity, would have sought to expand them. Jewish military operations led directly and indirectly to the Palestinian exodus, but the very logic of the kind of war, however cleanly conducted, that Israel was forced to wage—in which insurgents and irregular forces must be uprooted from their bases of support—of necessity brutalizes civilians and engenders obscene numbers of refugees, as students of counterinsurgency operations from the Boer War to Nicaragua will attest. We today can decry the Zionists' policies as "ethnic cleansing," but how could a Jewish state viably function with a vast and hostile Arab population? Israel's leaders in 1949 recognized that to allow the return of the Palestinian refugees would have been suicidal, just as Israel's leaders today understand the consequences of acceding to a Palestinian "right of return." But that doesn't make the Palestinians' cause any less just. Morris's is a story of two peoples, each with reasonable claims to the same land. And it should make us shudder to realize that the thrust of his analysis suggests that in the end—and to the detriment of those peoples, their region, and perhaps the entire world—their aspirations are not amenable to compromise.

FICTION

FIDELITY, by Michael Redhill (Little, Brown). In fact there's very little fidelity, at least as conventionally defined, depicted in this hushed but stupendously accomplished story collection, largely devoted to the family, sexual, and marital lives of very middle-class Canadians. Whether exploring a mother's betrayal of her gifted eight-year-old son's trust ("She longed for him to have weaknesses, to try something and fail. It was a strange way to express her love, to want him to taste the poison of

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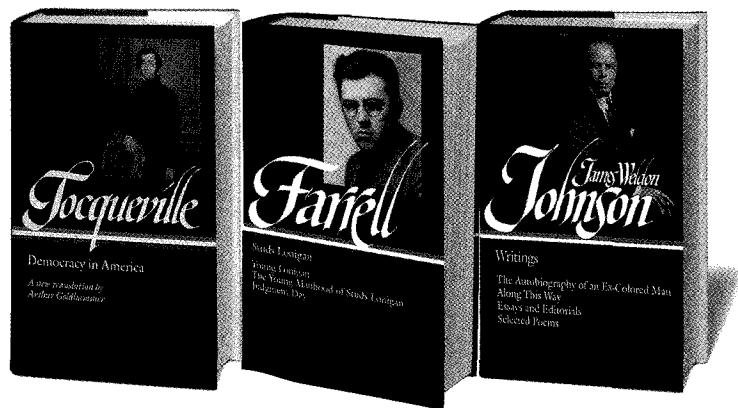
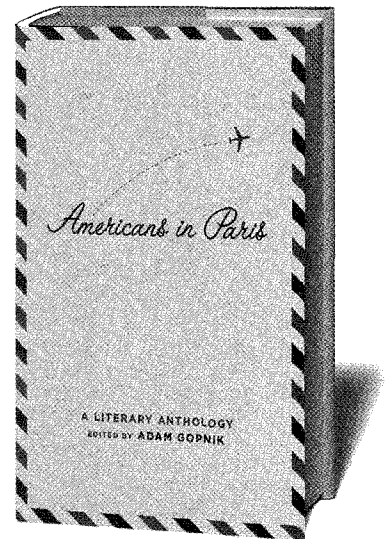
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disappointment") or a traveling school photographer's rueful reflections on his relationship with his former wife ("He hadn't, until very recently, he realized, had the heart for much, and the cost of that had been another person's happiness") or the corrosive consequences on his psyche of a middle manager's unrevealed adultery, Redhill's plaintive but unsentimental tales, which combine an almost ruthless economy with a delicacy of touch, probe good but broken people plagued by the recognition of their own profound inadequacies. Although melancholic (the narrator of the last story aptly characterizes sex and love as "a gloomy business"), Redhill leavens his tales with an off-kilter if devastating humor, as in the gifted boy's statistical assessment, complete with chart, of the relationship between his parents' marriage and the manner of breakfast preparation.

He weighted "hot food, mother eats with us" (the most desirable condition) four times more than "cold food, mother in bed" (the least desirable) and calculated the Marriage Correlative as the weekly mean given those weights. And if the monthly average of the MC fell below 4, he considered the safety of his family life at risk.

He could see from this that things were falling apart.

Ambiguous, undramatic, attentive to detail (the bantering sarcasm that settles on a divorced couple's conversation; an office manager's meddlesome tone), these stories will inevitably be described as "quiet." But make no mistake: every one will leave the reader shaken.

BIOGRAPHY

THE MAKING OF THE POETS, by Ian Gilmour (Carroll & Graf). This extraordinarily elegant and deeply researched portrait of Byron and Shelley ends in 1812 (four years before the poets met), when the former was twenty-four and the latter was nineteen. Byron would be dead in merely twelve years, Shelley in merely ten. With easy erudition and wry sympathy—which must have been somewhat hard to muster for these often unpleasant and immature young

men—Gilmour, former editor of *The Spectator* and the author of an exceptional scholarly history of violence in eighteenth-century England, explores their pedigrees and upbringing, education, literary experiments, and early erotic lives. Although there's a glut of fine biographies of each writer, Gilmour's illumination of the influences on their profound (and within their class, exceedingly rare) radicalism is unrivaled. With precision he reveals the brutal conditions at Harrow and Eton that fueled their ferocious hatred of all persecution; the intellectual stupor that pervaded Cambridge and Oxford; the English imagination's absorption of the French Revolution and the pervasive, deadening reaction—political, social, moral—that followed it; the currents of European thought and discussion that penetrated the English mind; and the enormous changes in and challenges to the social and economic order that were confronting England in the opening decades of the nineteenth century (Byron's maiden speech, which from the text Gilmour judges to be "probably the best oration made in the House of Lords in the nineteenth century," was a defense of the Luddites). This is above all the story of the making of two lonely and highly isolated heretics. Each, as Henry James wrote of Byron, "quarreled with the temper and accent of his age"—a stance Gilmour deems heroic. His empathy is itself somewhat heroic: Gilmour isn't necessarily one to warm to two poets opposed to nearly all institutions of the Church and State, being himself among the Tory party's most distinguished statesmen, and having served as Defense Secretary under Edward Heath, and as deputy foreign secretary under Margaret Thatcher.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, by Ron Chernow (Penguin Press). Why can't anyone write a great life of Alexander Hamilton? The most glamorous, brilliant, farsighted, and high-strung of the Founders, Hamilton has eluded his biographers, whose plodding efforts—with the exception of Forrest McDonald's perspicacious but highly eccentric *Alexander Hamilton*—stand in contrast to their subject's éclat. One obvious problem

is that although Jefferson is remembered for inspiring if woolly sloganeering, Hamilton's most significant and enduring contributions lie in his sophisticated, chilly political theory; in his often arcane ideas about and innovations in banking and finance; and in his vision for America's capitalist and industrial development (discussed most fully by the late John C. Miller in his dense, intelligent, but dated and somewhat stilted political and intellectual biography, *Alexander Hamilton and the Growth of the New Nation*, which Transaction Publishers has just reissued). So it takes an exceptionally analytical—even somewhat abstract—mind, along with an enormously skillful pen, to translate Hamilton's intricate ideas and relate them to his times, his dashing personality, and his personal history. (So far, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick have managed this most successfully with their elegant and penetrating pen portrait of Hamilton, embedded in their dazzling book *The Age of Federalism*.) Chernow, who has written books at once fat and discerning on the House of Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and the Warburgs, obviously knows his economics and finance (his exposition of Hamilton's *Report on the Public Credit*, for instance, is remarkably fluent). But he's just as obviously not at home in the eighteenth century; his grasp of its religion, attitudes, and intellectual history is unsure, and he lacks command of the ideological, political, sectional, and social differences that divided the early republic. The past is a notoriously foreign country, and too often in Chernow's account Hamilton, his allies, and his rivals come off as guys in powdered wigs. And too often, perhaps intimidated by this alien world, Chernow lapses into the sin that commonly afflicts writers of doorstep histories and biographies: he chronicles events, rather than interprets them. (The same limitations mar David McCulloch's and, especially, Walter Isaacson's recent books. But while such older academic historians as Edmund Morgan and Gordon Wood write as gracefully and vividly as these popularizers, virtually none of their younger colleagues do. "Those who know cannot write, and those



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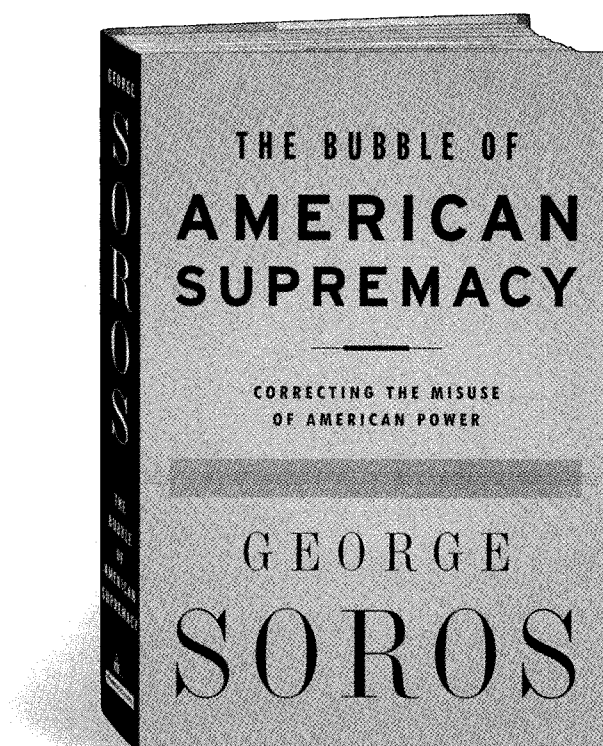
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who can write do not know," as Norman Podhoretz lamented; the scholarly criticism of Isaacson's and McCullough's work is justifiable, but to decry their popularity is to indict the academy.) Nevertheless, Chernow's long-awaited book illustrates an important cultural trend, because in its admiring portrait of its subject and its unflattering portrayal of Hamilton's *bête noire*, Jefferson, it confirms the precipitous decline of the latter's reputation and the ascendancy of the former's, among both liberal and conservative members of the intellectual class. In recent studies... whereas Hamilton is perceived as brave, generous, and charming, Jefferson appears self-righteous, humorless, and prickly; whereas Hamilton is shown to have prophesied the country's economic and political centralization, Jefferson's political beliefs—in direct democracy and strict construction—are deemed irrelevant or wrong; whereas Hamilton's racial attitudes are held up to his credit, Jefferson's pseudo-scientific racism is characterized as repellent (as it was to many at the time). Finally, whereas Jefferson's political philosophy was derivative and underdeveloped (Adams justifiably called the Declaration of Independence "Dress and ornament rather than Body, Soul and Substance"), the *Federalist Papers*, of which Hamilton wrote the bulk, are the towering American contribution to political theory, and his reports on public credit and manufactures constitute the only lasting contribution to political economy written by the Founders. I'll leave it to others to divine the significance, if any, of the fact that the image of the man customarily hailed as the champion of democracy is now at its nadir, while that of Hamilton, traditionally seen as the pseudo-aristocratic ally of big business, has never been higher. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.

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BOOKS

NASTY, BRUTISH, AND SHORT

Our author finds Jeffrey Masson's "divertingly amateurish" style likely to broaden the audience for the animal-rights movement in a way that Peter Singer and Matthew Scully never could

BY B. R. MYERS

.....

Although linked by a subtitle to his innocuous best sellers about dogs and cats, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's *The Pig Who Sang to the Moon* reads suspiciously like a veiled attack on meat-eating—until page three, that is, when the veil comes off. It is a more muddled attack than we have come to expect from the animal-rights movement, but that may be why it works so well. Most of us want to be talked out of enjoying our favorite foods about as much as we want to be talked into studying *The Watchtower* in our spare time; we're more likely to let people try to convert us if we don't think they've spent years perfecting their harangue. Masson, then, may be just the sort of spokesman the animals have been waiting for. His approach is so divertingly amateurish, his logic so far from airtight, that we see no harm in letting him ramble on for just one more chapter—only to find we've turned the last page, and he has affected us by the simple decency of his example.

Unless the author thinks that quoting Gandhi is the way to cast an awed

hush over neighborhood barbecues, he did not write *The Pig Who Sang to the Moon* for the average American meat eater. The publishers, for their part, must have known that the PETA crowd would be put off by the open-doored fantasy barn on the cover and the absence of grisly photographs inside. No, this book

is aimed squarely at the James Herriot-reading fellow travelers of the animal-rights movement: those kindhearted people who are always looking for ways to help, even if it means donating a perfectly good exercise machine to the Humane Society

thrift shop; the ones who are so appalled by factory farms that they've pretty much given up meat entirely, especially veal, unless, of course, they're at someone's house; these are the people who assume an air of solidarity with the movement that drives it stark raving mad. If Masson shares his comrades' urge to tell all these ovo-lacto-carno-vegetarians where they can put their Mr. Winkle calendars, he has done an impressive job of restraining himself—

THE PIG WHO SANG TO THE MOON: THE EMOTIONAL WORLD OF FARM ANIMALS

by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson
Ballantine

as well he should have. For better or worse, they're the closest thing to an audience the animal-rights movement has, and it's about time someone wrote something on this subject that they won't feel too upset to read.

Masson's main point is that animals, far from being dumb and unfeeling, are similar enough to human beings to suffer horribly from the conditions in which they are farmed and slaughtered. The dust jacket calls this "revolutionary" talk, but it's unlikely to elicit much surprise or disagreement even from the meat-eating mainstream. The idea that the animals we eat are mere moving things, though still widespread in Asia (the word for "animal" in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean means "moving thing"), is common in the West only in regard to fish, which we hardly think of as being slaughtered at all, and to the lobsters we boil alive. For the farm animal, on the other hand, we've always had more pity than Masson seems to think; not for nothing do we get choked up when reading *Charlotte's Web* to our children. But this is a false pity—what the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig defined in another context as "the heart's impatience to rid itself as quickly as possible of the painful emotion aroused by another's misfortune." Its main effect on our lives is to make us lunge for the TV remote (ill-temperedly, as if a trust had been broken) whenever a camera so much as points at a slaughterhouse across a cornfield. We don't support gratuitous cruelty—we're not *monsters*, for God's sake—but neither do we lose any sleep wondering what happens to farm animals when we're not looking. Still less do we care what goes on in their hearts and minds. Research could prove that cows love Jesus, and the line at the McDonald's drive-through wouldn't be one sagging carload shorter the next day. The ethological thrust of Masson's book is therefore no more likely to change our behavior than the other arguments he tosses in for good measure—philosophical and moral arguments that the animal-rights movement has spent decades preaching to a world that can barely be bothered to look up from its plate. As the heroine of J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) con-

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cludes in one of her lectures, our hearts are closed to animals; we have the capacity to imagine their suffering, "but choose not to exercise it."

This is precisely what makes Mas-son's style so important, a style that contrasts strongly with that of most well-known books on this theme. In *Animal Liberation* (1975), the bible of the movement, Peter Singer seems at pains to present himself as prickly and aloof, a man who has never felt the need for a pet, and he obviously wants non-vegetarian readers to see themselves reflected in a pair of cat-loving dimwits who once asked him over for ham sandwiches. A similar inability to relate to any but the already indignant marks Matthew Scully's *Dominion* (2002), an otherwise brilliant book that was reviewed in these pages. The cover shows a trussed ram, the inside jacket promises a "painful" read complete with a visit to a "hellish" farm, and the introduction starts like this:

It began with one pig at a British slaughterhouse. Somewhere along the production line it was observed that the animal had blisters in his mouth and was salivating. The worst suspicions were confirmed, and within days borders had been sealed and a course of action determined. Soon all of England and the world watched as hundreds, and then hundreds of thousands, of pigs, cows, and sheep and their newborn lambs were taken outdoors, shot, thrown into burning pyres, and bulldozed into muddy graves. Reporters described terrified cattle being chased by sharpshooters, clambering over one another to escape. Some were still stirring and blinking a day after being shot.

I don't know about England, but America certainly didn't watch that, and wouldn't have watched it for anything. Nor is it interested in reading a book that starts out like that. The reason a hurried "Oh, I hardly eat meat either" has become such a popular response to another's declaration of vegetarianism is usually not that we mean it, but that we now know enough about factory farming to want to stop Scully types from telling us any more. It's a cold-blooded squeamishness all right, like that of the German villagers who scowled into their handkerchiefs rather than behold the corpses in

liberated death camps, but it does no good for activists to rage against it. This is a free country (for human beings), and the American meat eater doesn't need to consider anything he doesn't want to. Try forcing him, and he will only conclude, again like those German villagers, that the whole exercise has more to do with punishment than persuasion.

That Masson has grasped this is evident right from the start of his book, in an anecdotal preface devoted to the singing pig of the title. It's not much of a story, at least not as it's told, but it's a happy one, and its context establishes the sixty-two-year-old author as a relaxed and amiable family man. "A nice person like you can't possibly know what wonderful, sensitive creatures farm animals are," Masson seems to be saying to us throughout, "or you wouldn't be paying people to brutalize them, would you?" This approach keeps things positive despite the sad notes struck on every page. It's possible that Masson is consciously using an old child-rearing ploy to appeal to our better natures ("What you don't realize when you pull your sister's hair is that it *hurts* her"), but I doubt it. He seems genuinely excited about being able to tell us that pigs prefer to be clean, and that a mother hen is as protective of her young as, well, a mother hen. The familiarity of these revelations is both touching and humbling, as is Masson's belief that "in general, the more we know about something, the more we care." Who's to say that this simple faith in human understanding and compassion won't induce some readers to justify it?

Masson used to be a psychoanalyst, and was a professor of Sanskrit before that. It's a good thing that his attempts to pose as a serious animal researcher are always so endearingly half-assed. Swanning around in someone else's white coat will get even the most charming raconteur in trouble, but there's no law against clipping a pocket protector to your dressing gown and leaning somberly forward. "In order to understand an animal we know today, I have looked at its ancestors," he says at one point, claiming thereby to have won "the kind of insight into the personalities and needs of farm animals

that has been missing for centuries." Well, our ancestors lived in trees, but that's hardly relevant to our emotional needs today—or, for that matter, to a plea for prison reform. In practice, Masson's approach serves mainly to excuse his habit of digressing from the miserable lives of pigs, cows, chickens, goats, and sheep to more uplifting trivia about their cousins in the wild.

People do not think of chickens as having the ability to fly. Chickens rarely fly. Having seen its wild ancestors, the Burmese fowl, also called the northern red jungle fowl, all over India and Bali, I can confirm that these birds fly, and quite well. Their evolutionary cousin, the eider duck, is one of the fastest flying of all birds. Not even swifts or swallows can outpace an eider.

Nor can an eider duck outpace Masson's mind as it flies from anecdote to expert opinion to literary quotation and back again, seldom perching anywhere for more than half a page and sometimes hardly alighting at all. A few of the anecdotes are so short and unsatisfying that they seem like captions to missing photographs. (If ever a book needed more of a visual element, it's this one.) Still, the parts tend to be involving enough to make for a readable whole. The reader's good will is tested only when Masson quotes the ethological community with approval on one page and then rails against it a little later, usually for its refusal to confirm or deny that animals have emotions. One can share his impatience with the state of research while at the same time finding it only proper that scientists have a higher standard of what constitutes hard evidence. Conjecture and anecdotalism can cut both ways, after all; the meat industry probably has no shortage of anti-Massons who are ready to gaze into the eyes of a pig and tell us that it actually *likes* not being able to turn around.

Mindful of his readership, the author provides only occasional glimpses into the horrors of factory farming, but he has chosen them well. It is one thing to be dimly aware, as we all are, that calves are dragged from their mothers lest they get at "our" milk. It's another thing to read this:

One particular cow ... appeared to be deeply affected by the separation

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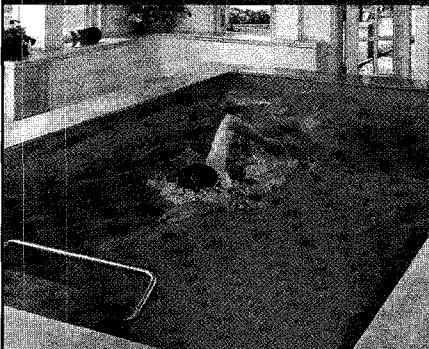
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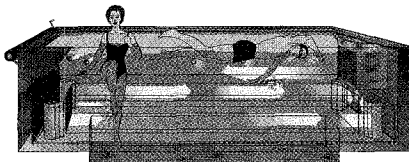
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from her calf ... When the calf was first removed, she was in acute grief; she stood outside the pen where she had last seen her calf and bellowed for her offspring for hours. She would only move when forced to do so. Even after six weeks, the mother would gaze at the pen where she last saw her calf and sometimes wait momentarily outside of the pen.

By that time, in all likelihood, the calf had gone out of its mind in a veal crate, if it wasn't dead already. (They say the Masai drink blood with their milk—but don't we all?) This is from the same chapter:

A friend [said] that she passed a slaughterhouse every morning ... and she noticed the cows lined up in the pre-slaughter pen from where they could see their companions being killed. They were trembling—they could hardly stand up they were shaking so badly. They were absolutely terrified.

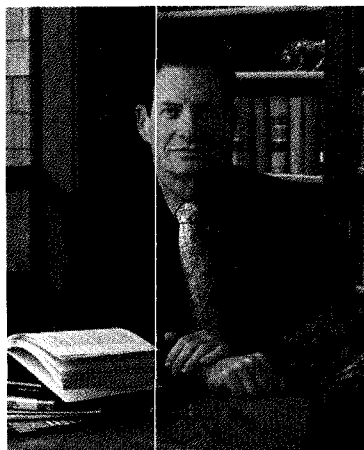
Some activists might wish that Masson had taken a long, gory look at what those cows were seeing, but he was smart not to do so, or to give readers any other reason to plead nausea and excuse themselves. His book is to *Dominion* as *The Diary of Anne Frank* is to *Shoah*.

Regarding a visit to a jam-packed and eerily quiet broiler shed, Masson writes, "I had a horrible realization that I was letting these chickens down, even as I was there to understand and write about their plight in the hope that some people would see that killing them was wrong." These words are the key to understanding what Masson has set out to do here. Singer and Scully have grander plans for reconfiguring the ethical or theological landscape, the better to bring about a broad shift in public opinion; hence the intellectual thoroughness of their arguments, but also their indifference to engaging the interest of (let alone entertaining) the individual meat eater. Masson's goal is both more modest and more ambitious: he wants our animals. In effect, we each start life with about six cows, thirty sheep, twenty-two pigs, fifteen ducks, and eight hundred chickens in our very own factory farm. Those of us who choose not to eat meat set that number of animals free, while the rest of us kill "ours" one by one to eat them, and the last is in our stomachs when we die. (Surely this way of

putting things is close enough to the literal truth for all sides to agree on.) If Masson's goal is to rescue animals from our hands, then it's easy to understand why his approach is as inconsistent as a police negotiator's in a hostage standoff: why he appeals now to our hearts, now to our minds; why he passes the megaphone to scientists when it suits him and yanks it angrily away when it doesn't; why he urges the release of all the animals and then voices hope for even a small improvement in their situation; why he is ready to try anything he can to reach our souls through the walls of our selfishness—walls that in this case are reinforced by social convention and the law.

It's no easy task, but if anyone has the people skills for it, it's Masson. During his research he even managed to get some farm workers to let their guard down and concede, though they tended to contradict themselves in the same breath, that pigs and cows are a lot more like human beings than the public thinks. Masson is kindhearted enough to ascribe their inconsistency to an inner struggle over the moral implications of their livelihood. It was more likely a matter of shins being kicked under the table. But these farm workers kill animals because they can support their families by doing so, whereas we order the killing for reasons that have never been more frivolous, now that meat is no longer considered necessary for one's health, and soy products can replicate to an uncanny degree the experience of eating it. I know, "It's just not the *same*"—but as with the child molester, who probably thinks those very words when he rolls off his wife, the nonviolent pleasure is surely close enough to the violent one to make an insistence on the latter even more monstrous. Has any generation in history ever been so ready to cause so much suffering for such a trivial advantage? We deaden our consciences to enjoy—for a few minutes a day—the taste of blood, the feel of our teeth meeting through muscle. It's enough, as Balzac would say, to disgust a sow. ▀

B. R. Myers is the author of A Reader's Manifesto: An Attack on the Growing Pretentiousness in American Literary Prose (2002), a portion of which first appeared in the July/August 2001 Atlantic.



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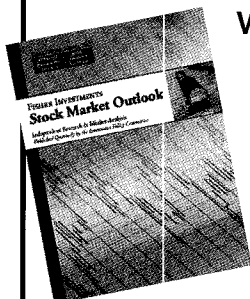
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BOOKS

DOMESTICATED GODDESS

"Dying is an art," said Sylvia Plath. But so is living, and she excelled at both—not that her biographers, with one wise and big-hearted exception, have noticed

BY CRISTINA NEHRING

.....

Fall 1956: Sylvia Plath is typing a poem about a public execution. It isn't her poem; it is that of her new husband, Ted Hughes. She always types his poems and sends them to publishers. "Without Sylvia, Ted might have had to work in rose gardens ... for quite a few more years," his best friend once admitted. Hughes was still unknown then, and more inclined to work odd jobs in the great outdoors than to mail around manuscripts. In any case, in 1956 Plath is typing a poem, a poem about a bishop's being burned at the stake before the citizens of his town, a poem about the power of death—violent death—to win an audience for one's words. The poem's epigraph consists of the bishop's dying

words; it is as striking as the poem itself: *"If I flinch from the pain of the burning, believe not the doctrine that I have preached."*

October 1962: four months before her suicide, at age thirty, Sylvia Plath is typing a poem about a mysterious "bee meeting." It is her own poem. Villagers are assembled to "hunt the queen." Almost imperceptibly their search assumes a new direction. They turn on Plath's speaker herself. There is a "blackout of knives" and, in an uncanny echo of Hughes's bishop, the slashed young woman intones,

*I am the magician's girl who does not flinch,
The villagers are untying their*

*disguises, they are shaking hands.
Whose is that long white box
in the grove, what have they
accomplished, why am I cold.*

With a start we realize that the villagers have murdered her; she has acquiesced in her own killing—heroically, numbly, like the doomed bishop. The allusions to Hughes's poem are too numerous to ignore: rural execution, dumb-faced villagers in attendance, the victim's articulated refusal to flinch. And, possibly, the stygian suggestion that if you want to be credible, if you want your "doctrine" to be believed, you must be prepared to die for it. There is nothing like a cadaver to prove sincerity—or to seize the attention of the world.

Would we believe in Plath's poetry as much as we do had she not followed it with suicide? It's a distasteful question, and to answer it in the negative would seem to imply some untenable things: first, that she did well to kill herself, and second, that her poetry might not have made the grade without the violence in its history. Her poetry, as far as I'm concerned, is some of the most starkly gorgeous and audacious of all time; her gift for metaphor is unsurpassed in modern literature; and her honesty is searing, hard-won, and precise. If we could bottle her verse, it would be the strongest brew in the bar.

And yet we are drawn to the relation between art and life—and between art and death, as Plath herself was drawn to it, desperately, obsessively, and amorously. Had she not taken her life after those dark, death-fondling poems of her final months, the ones she called "the best poems of my life," the ones that "will make my name," but lived on, coffee-sipping, into comfortable middle age, we might have thought, with some of her more unsympathetic biographers, that she was a literary crybaby, a poseur, an unscrupulous appropriator of other people's feelings. And she would have understood such a response. She, too, felt that all is play, all is poetic dalliance, that does not involve real stakes and exact a price. "If it were death / I would admire the deep gravity of it, its timeless eyes. / I would know you were serious," she writes (as though to herself) in "A Birthday Present." Death is authenticating.

PHOTO: SIV ARB. SPECIAL COLLECTION AND ARCHIVES, ROBERT W. WOODRUFF LIBRARY, EMORY UNIVERSITY

If Plath could admit it, why can't we? Who ever said life does not—or should not—influence how we read our writers? Do scholars of Heidegger say as much? They owe a good deal of their opinion of him to his activities as a Nazi. If an artist's work can be *eclipsed* by life, surely it can be *enhanced* as well—even if this enhancement is monstrous.

But her suicide was no career move. There was the matter, first, of Hughes's abandoning her in the fall of 1962—no small matter, given Plath's unstinting adoration of him and the couple's total fusion of their artistic, professional, emotional, and domestic lives, a fusion Diane Middlebrook documents in the new biography *Her Husband: Hughes and Plath, A Marriage*. Anyone who thinks that Plath was purely morbid or misanthropic should read her journal entries about Hughes in the first several years of their marriage. They burst with light and love. He was her unrivaled hero almost until the day he left her for another woman. She beat and badgered herself to be "worthy" of him; she loved his scent, his size, his brain, his heart, his verse, his prose, even the "cruel streak" she thought she discerned in him. It was all part of his mythic manliness in her eyes, his encompassing genius. If she was difficult and demanding at times, as seems obvious, it was because of her native volatility, and not because her love for him knew any bounds. When he left her, the sky fell.

There was also her lifelong fascination with death. Her father had succumbed to diabetes when she was eight, and since then death had lived with her like a tempting friend whose hand she sought during moments of uncertainty. When it looked at the ripe old age of twenty like she wasn't going to make it as a writer, she tried to fling herself into his arms; she tried too hard, swallowed too many sleeping pills, and vomited them up while unconscious, thus enabling her rescue, two days later, from a hiding place under the house. When she related this ordeal later—in her novel *The Bell Jar*, and also in poems, letters, and conversations with intimates—she lent it a terrible sensuality.

These two factors joined with her long-honed talent and increasing bold-

ness to create the astonishing poems collected in *Ariel*, which, in their turn, came to govern her life. The critic and friend of Plath's Al Alvarez has said that "for the artist, nature often imitates art," and there are few artists of whom this is truer than it is of Plath. She imagined herself marrying a demigod, a force "huge enough for me," and she married "Ted Huges" (as he was known in Cambridge), a towering Pan figure with "pockets full of poems [and] fresh trout." She dreamed of "giv[ing] myself crashing, fighting," to him—and she did.

In her sparse, haunting last poem, "Edge," Plath sketched a suicide. It is a stern and beautiful suicide: a triumph—more than a failure—of the will. The woman rendered resembles Shakespeare's Cleopatra, who dies with the asp at her breasts, stinging her to sleep. She also resembles Sylvia Plath.

"The woman is perfected," rings the chill, monumental first line.

Her dead

Body wears the smile of
accomplishment,

The illusion of a Greek necessity

Flows in the scrolls of her toga.

... Each dead child coiled, a white
serpent,

One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.

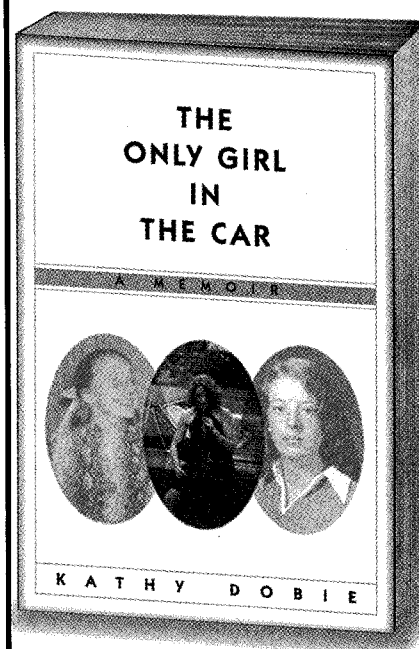
Was Plath drugged by the lyric invitation of the poem? Or had she simply painted herself into a corner with this work, drawing, as it did so heavily, on her biography? In any case, she placed two pitchers of milk next to her slumbering children soon after, taped up their nursery door, put her pale cheek against the stove after turning on the gas, and allowed the "odors to bleed / From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower," allowed them to bleed away her life. She came as close to reenacting her poem as one can in a small London apartment, without fanfare.

I would like to go further than Al Alvarez and suggest that Plath's life was not only fuel for her work; it was part of that work. John Milton once said that a poet's life should itself be "a true poem." He himself failed resoundingly in this ideal, not just because his life was tragic but because it was sprawling,

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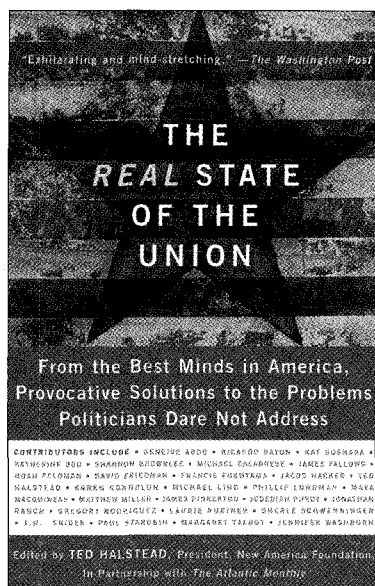


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petty, punctuated by long stretches of nothingness, thick on work but thin on grace. Plath's life, in contrast, is a sort of poem, tragic though it is. She shaped it with the aesthetic perfectionism of a sculptor. She infused it with a playwright's drama: a college boyfriend remembers her penchant for corresponding in "hyperbole"; always "seeking a chance to dramatize her life." She ordered it with an architect's eye for symmetry: even her suicide attempts form a pattern, the pattern reified in her wild, strident, sarcastic, colloquial, exhibitionistic poem "Lady Lazarus."

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight ...

And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like a cat I have nine times
to die.

This is Number Three.

She took mad chances, marrying "the biggest seducer in Cambridge" and moving to his country. She studded her life with the bold risks of an expert gambler—plunging vertically down a mountain her first day on skis (she broke her leg in two places). In the end she lost, but her art did not. If "dying is an art," as she says in "Lady Lazarus," and she "does it exceptionally well," so is living, and she did *that* exceptionally well too. *Not* wisely, as Othello said, but *well*—artistically, dramatically, aesthetically.

Literary scholars, of course, tend to see life as an embarrassment to art; indeed, many sober works of Plath criticism begin with a ritual lament about the biographical hocus-pocus that has interfered with lucid contemplation of the poetry. But although Plath's poetry stands alone as well as any, it is damagingly puritanical to bar discussion of her life, as though the spirit of her poetry would be polluted by proximity to her fallen flesh. It is puritanical, too, to think that the life of a poet might not reflect the same rigorous aesthetic discipline as her writing—that it might not

in fact constitute a kind of "performance art." Avant-garde museums put on exhibitions by painters who smear themselves with pigment or mud and enact a plotless skit before audiences; if there is a case to be made for calling such slices of "stylized life" art, how much stronger a case there is for applying this term to the superbly crafted quotidian lines of a Sylvia Plath.

It's in part because Plath's life already bears so many marks of fiction that it has lent itself so easily to formal fictionalization. As I write, a movie, *Sylvia*, is opening with Gwyneth Paltrow as Plath; a play called *Edge* is showing off-Broadway; and the second novel about Plath's life in only two years has hit the bookstores. Middlebrook's biography emerged the same month as the expanded edition of an older biography, by Linda Wagner-Martin. Finally, there's a new memoir, by Jillian Becker, a friend who knew Plath for a few months before she died. Narratives about Plath are almost as tempting to write as they are to read, precisely because their subject has already done so much of the work for us; the girl who complained that she could never come up with a plot when writing her own stories has given biographers, playwrights, filmmakers, and novelists a ready-made plot in her life.

Not that these books resemble one another in more than a few strokes. The history of biographical writing on Plath is vexed; her biographers have had their names made, their health wrecked (Anne Stevenson), and their hearts broken (Emma Tennant) in their endeavors; they have been turned into the subjects of biographical sketches themselves (by Janet Malcolm, in *The Silent Woman*). And they have presented Plath as everything from a martyred feminist saint to a psychotic termagant to a happy homemaker. In fact, with fortunate exceptions, that has been the general progression of interpretation since the 1960s. When Plath died, and the truth of her suicide and Hughes's abandonment first became known, the outcry among feminists and feminist sympathizers was immense. Hughes was demonized in poems (by Robin Morgan, for example) urging his castration and

accusing him of murder; Plath's tombstone was vandalized repeatedly by those who did not want her husband's name on it ("Sylvia Plath Hughes"); the "anger" in "Daddy" and other poems was seen as representative of a generation of women; her books filled shop windows, and she was all but canonized. But this did not hold.

Part of the reason is that Ted Hughes appointed his protective older sister, Olwyn, the literary executor of Plath's estate. Olwyn had despised her sister-in-law. She had "resented" Plath's "talent and beauty as well as her relationship with Ted," as Elizabeth Sigmund, a friend of Hughes's and Plath's, described it: "Sylvia ... often told me that Olwyn hated her ... When I met Olwyn after Sylvia's death, I felt she had understated Olwyn's attitude." This woman was now in the single most important position to control Plath's transmission to the world. Everyone who wanted to write anything of any import about her had—or initially wished—to go through Olwyn Hughes. She granted permissions to quote; but she granted them at a price.

It is in part for this reason that no foible of Plath's has been left uncovered, no spurned suitor left un-interviewed, and that an authorized biographer like Anne Stevenson has written of Plath as of a mad-woman in the attic. It is certainly for this reason that we have an improbable rant like Dido Merwin's, which was expansively quoted in Stevenson's *Bitter Fame*. A London friend, Merwin assailed Plath for ignoring her advice to obtain home furnishings secondhand: Plath's "unexpectedly graceless rejection ... was like a warning shot" to Merwin, but if Plath "elected to go splurging on a posh cooker, refrigerator, and bed, what the hell?" To Merwin

and her husband "it would have made complete sense had we had any inkling of the besetting insecurity that was the root cause of Sylvia's need for morale-boosting toys." *Morale-boosting toys?* A fridge? *Besetting insecurity?* Because Plath desired a new stove?

But there are other reasons for what one might call the pathologization of Sylvia Plath. America's love affair with psychopharmacology is one; innumer-

able essays have appeared tracing Plath's work to everything from clinical psychosis and bipolar illness to menstrual disorders. The most persuasive of these assessments are written by literary scholars who do not, like many of their colleagues, take as a starting point Plath's suicide attempts, her wilder *Ariel* poems, or even the attacks of jealousy for which she is so harshly judged in *Bitter Fame*. However unproductive, Plath's jealousy can hardly be considered unfounded; when Plath met Hughes, he was described to her as the biggest Casanova in town, and the way he seduced *her* (with his girlfriend in the next room) gave her no reason to doubt this appraisal. Nor does Hughes's life after Plath suggest that he was in any way inclined toward fidelity; he left Assia Wevill (the married woman for whom he had left Plath) for *another* married woman, and after Wevill gassed

herself, in an amplified replay of Plath's suicide (killing their child as well), he left his second married woman (who, luckily, survived) to propose to a young nurse, who remained his wife until his death and watched as he had numberless affairs, many of them extremely public, some simultaneous, and at least a few punctuated by promises of elopement.

The more plausible doubts about Plath's mental stability relate to the jarringly different voices in her writings—

*Discussed in
this essay*

**HER HUSBAND:
HUGHES AND PLATH,
A MARRIAGE**

by Diane Middlebrook
Viking Press

**WINTERING: A NOVEL
OF SYLVIA PLATH**

by Kate Moses
St. Martin's Press

**GIVING UP: THE LAST
DAYS OF SYLVIA PLATH:
A MEMOIR**

by Jillian Becker
St. Martin's Press

**SYLVIA PLATH:
A LITERARY LIFE**
by Linda Wagner-Martin
Palgrave Macmillan

**SYLVIA
screenplay**
by John Brownlow
Focus Features

**BITTER FAME: A LIFE
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by Emma Tennant
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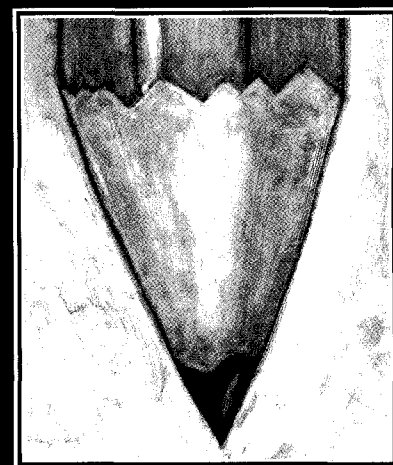
THE SILENT WOMAN
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the exhaustingly upbeat tone she employed in her huge correspondence with her mother (the "Sivvy" letters, as Marjorie Perloff dubs them, published in *Letters Home*) juxtaposed with the dark, cutting, often hostile persona in the *Ariel* poems that she wrote at the same time, sometimes about the same events. Critics have put letters next to poems and declared her nuts: Look at this ecstatic letter about sweet Ted's bringing her tulips when she was in the hospital, they will say. And now look at the poem "Tulips": the flowers "hurt" her; they are "dangerous animals"; the smiles of the speaker's husband and child "catch onto my skin" like "little smiling hooks." Was she schizophrenic? Or just a pathological liar?

I don't think Plath was a pathological liar. Neither was she an overdutiful daughter, as has also been claimed, laboring—at the expense of truth and taste—to cheer her mother. She wrote these letters because it answered a basic need in her: to portray—and to *feel*—herself as being in control, capable, cheerful, resourceful, and happy. Anybody who imagines that she ran around ranting blackly like Lady Lazarus and "eating men like air"—or even wallowing catatonically like the speaker in "Tulips"—is absurdly mistaken. (Looking at photographs of Plath, Janet Malcolm feels "disappointed" that she lacks Lazarus's "red hair" and an appropriately fierce expression.) Plath didn't curse or cower in her daily life; she coped. She got up in the morning and told herself she was happy; otherwise she could not have accomplished all the child care, household duties, moves, mailings, meetings with editors, typing for Ted, horseback riding, knitting, German study, beekeeping, and writing in several genres that we know she did. "Without visiting the [Plath] archives, it would be impossible to comprehend just how prolific Plath's output was," one scholar has marveled. And just as Plath told herself she was happy, and could keep doing this, she told her mother the same thing. That does not mean there wasn't a level at which Plath gave free rein to her doubts, at which she permitted herself to be pessimistic, to be *brutal*, to follow her fears, her fantasies, her darker intu-

itions, as far down or up as they would take her. It seems to me that the critics who call Plath schizophrenic are pretending that people are simpler than they are.

But there is a further reason for the souring toward Plath in later biographical works. It is that any number of writers who set out to research her fell in love with her husband. Mainly female, and mainly intellectually iconoclastic, they came into contact with Hughes during their research and gravitated toward him as Plath had, probably for some of the same reasons: his shady sexual history, bad press, enormously articulate intelligence, love of women, carefully timed reticence, and strategically deployed loquacity. Usually Hughes left the dirty work of corresponding with Plath investigators to Olwyn, but when he chose, he could write a masterly letter: "When [Hughes] writes about Plath, he renders all the other writings about her crude and trivial," Janet Malcolm writes in *The Silent Woman*. Malcolm reprints a few incantatory examples; she also tells us she's on his "side" in the Plath-Hughes controversy. That is, she's on the side of "the Hugheses"—but given the surpassingly awful things she relates about Olwyn in the book, we can't quite believe it's because of her. Malcolm has seemingly fallen under Ted's spell—in much the same way as the English writer Emma Tennant before her. An aristocrat by birth, Tennant approached Hughes in part because of her interest in Plath, but soon fell in love and into bed with him; she now figures among the photos of mistresses in Elaine Feinstein's biography *Ted Hughes*. Their affair proceeded for years in the late seventies, and Tennant was surprised to find one day that Hughes was also publicly cohabiting with a beautiful Australian, Jill Barber. Tennant's admiration continued nonetheless, and in 2001 she published a novel about the Plath-Hughes marriage that is a miracle of fawning bias in favor of Hughes and clumsy belittling of Plath. *Sylvia and Ted* drips with sentences like "[Sylvia] knows that kind Ted is right: for Sylvia is damaged and he is not." Sylvia "sweats and pants"

while Ted "comes taller from" his work every day, "as triumphant as a woman who has experienced multiple births."

As far as sophistication and subtlety go, Malcolm is in a different league from Tennant, but she, too, is remarkably cavalier about Plath's suffering, all but chiding her for killing herself and denying Hughes the "peace that age brings" when all she had to forgive him for anyway was "youth." (Not that his *modus operandi* changed with age.) Malcolm coyly reveals the source of her bias when she reprints a letter she addressed to another Plath scholar, Jacqueline Rose. Describing the "sibling rivalry" she felt when Rose showed her a letter from Hughes and then took it back, Malcolm evokes the "image of two women fighting for something—over a man?" Over a man indeed. Plath scholars—from Olwyn and Feinstein to Tennant and Malcolm—have been fighting over him for years. Perhaps only now that he is dead can we begin to achieve some objectivity regarding this man who was so dangerously magnetic in person and correspondence, so lighthearted in relationships, and so mediocre, in my view, in the majority of his poems.

There have been biographical works other than the pathologizing kind over the past decades. Although Stevenson's *Bitter Fame* is the only authorized and still the best-received biography (with blurbs by John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates to recommend it), Linda Wagner-Martin, Paul Alexander, Ronald Hayman, and Jacqueline Rose (among others) have produced serious studies. Swimming against the current, these writers, who elected to forgo Olwyn Hughes's permissions and her formidable censorship, wrote valuable if quotation-poorer books. By far the wisest, shrewdest, best-written, and most poetically acute and big-hearted of these, however, is Middlebrook's *Her Husband*. This is the place to find a fair-minded and eminently readable guide to Plath and Hughes's artistic collaboration as well as to their erotic strife.

There are other places, of course, including the film, *Sylvia*, and Kate Moses's *Wintering*, a novel about Plath's final months, but they are inferior. That

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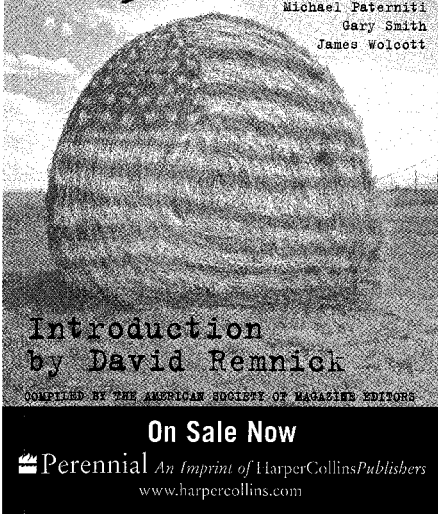
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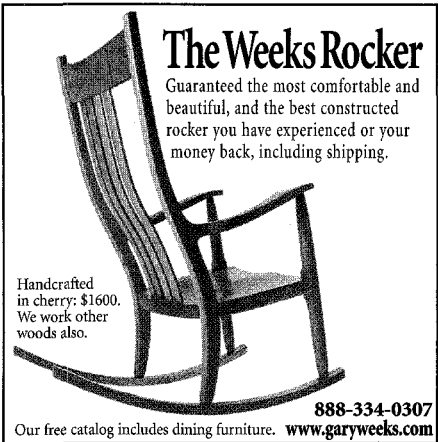
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said, they may be more representative of the new direction in Plath studies than Middlebrook's book. Having first sanctified and then pathologized their subject, Plath scholars are now beginning to domesticate her. The figure that emerges from John Brownlow's screenplay is a more or less pallid homemaker, a perpetually wounded stay-at-home wife who compulsively bakes pies and makes little worried noises about her roving husband. Though the film pays lip service to Plath's literary genius, and Gwyneth Paltrow does bear an uncanny resemblance to Plath, neither her boldness, her predatory passion, nor her self-determination is anywhere in evidence.

Worse, though, is the caricature we encounter in *Wintering*. Moses's book—if one can forget, for a moment, the baroque prose—essentially portrays Plath as a doting and somewhat simple-minded mother, occupied predominantly with changing her babies' "nappies" (The book makes record use of "potty" and "nappy.") Perhaps this is a necessary perspective on Plath, but it is a limited one: it captures little of what makes her great, troubled, or in any way different from the stereotypical adoring mom. And Plath *was* different from this stereotype. Jillian Becker, who cared for Plath during the last weekend of her life, paints a very different woman—one almost indifferent to her kids. Even if we make allowances for the fact that Plath was at her worst in the days chronicled in *Giving Up* (and that Becker, for all her kindness, seems to have understood her hardly at all), the fact remains that Plath's verse suggests a violent ambivalence toward maternity. That fact, oddly, is overlooked by any number of formidable readers, from Katha Pollitt, who has praised the "tenderness and purity of Plath's maternal feelings," to Linda Wagner-Martin, whose new edition of *Sylvia Plath: A Literary Life* spends a chapter strenuously misinterpreting Plath's lyrics about children. It is worth quoting from "Morning Song," Plath's most famous poem about maternity, and one that Wagner-Martin claims "recreates" the experience of "joyous mothering."

I'm no more your mother
Than the cloud that distills a mirror
to reflect its own slow
Effacement at the wind's hand.

The child effaces its mother's identity.
It also strips her of sexual power.

One cry, and I stumble from bed,
cow-heavy and floral
In my Victorian night-gown.

Once a nubile girl, the speaker is now a shapeless Victorian monster, a milking machine, a "cow."

It is among Plath's greatest strengths that she tells us in her poetry not only what is nice but also what is true—or what *can* be true. She shows us not only woman's selfless delight in her infant but also her fear of being upstaged, eclipsed, desexualized, by maternity—turned into an absurd instrument of biology, "a means, a stage, a cow in calf," as she puts it in "Metaphors." In some ways we are ready for Plath; in others we still aren't. We will allow her to rage against her father in "Daddy" (male authority figures are fair game), but when it comes to children, we insist on sentimentalizing her. This is what Moses's book does, and what several recent readings of Plath's poetry do. It is almost as though, in order to rehabilitate her after the pathologization of previous decades, we need to put her in an apron and make her Supermom. Moses has gone so far as to publish a magazine article titled "Baking With Sylvia," which pictures Moses standing, without irony, before a handsome gas stove demonstrating what she believes to be Plath's favorite recipes.

Plath was neither as sick nor as saccharine as her biographers have pretended. As her arresting poems and extraordinary journals reveal, she was fiercely honest, fiercely complicated, fiercely skilled, and fiercely emotional. "Too feeble fall the impressions of nature on us to make us artists," Ralph Waldo Emerson said. The impressions of nature did not fall feebly on Plath. They fell hard and deep, and they turned this hungry consumer of the American dream into an artist as urgent as she is indispensable. 

Cristina Nehring is at work on a book about love and feminism. She teaches English literature at the Université de Paris and UCLA.



BOOKS

ME AND MY MOGULS

A portraitist who has mastered the art of the suck-up putdown

BY ERIC ALTERMAN

.....

Whether or not you want to pick up a copy of Michael Wolff's new book depends on how you feel about passages like this one:

This was the meta thing. Meta gave both irony and gravitas to what we did. The delicious incongruity between our superficiality and our importance. The *joie de vivre* of self-referentialism. The stupendous, intoxicating power of being able to create the world we lived in ...

In fact, it depends on how you feel about such passages twice, because much of this book was previously published in Wolff's controversial weekly media column in *New York* magazine. The book, like the column (which recently moved from *New York* to *Vanity Fair* after Wolff and a group of major media moguls tried and failed to buy his employer), is ostensibly about life in the media-owned corporate skyboxes, far above the din of negligible things like

newspapers, magazine columns, books, and, well, book reviews—unless they are about the media. But both its charm and its bite derive from the enormous doses of ego that Wolff manages to inject into all his observations.

Though it pretends to have a narrative structure based on a now forgotten off-the-record mogul conference, at which Wolff interviewed Rupert Murdoch, and at which a bunch of other moguls and mogul watchers tried to impress, intimidate, and occasionally seduce one another,

much of what is notable in *Autumn of the Moguls* takes place within spitting distance of Wolff's table (No. 5) at the pricey midtown media watering hole Michael's (where I occasionally join him, courtesy of his prodigious expense account).

Here, at lunch (never dinner, only lunch; Elaine's is for dinner, don't ask me why), Wolff covers the scene like an ESPN commentator with ESP. Not only

does he know what media bigwigs are saying to one another, he knows what they wish they could be saying, wish they had said, fear they might say, and are too afraid even to think about saying, or even thinking, though they still can't help themselves. But Wolff sure can be confusing to anyone who's never been to Michael's at least vicariously—through the gossip columns of the New York tabloids. To those who complain of the myopia of the New York media world, *Autumn of the Moguls* provides an open-and-shut case. By the time Wolff offers his fourth meta-analysis of the career arc of CNN's former chairman Walter Isaacson, or of who, exactly, took whom to the cleaners in the ill-fated AOL Time Warner deal, the uninitiated might be forgiven for wishing to throw this book across the room in disgust, screaming, "The Founders gave us a First Amendment so these schmucks can screw up the news like *this*?" Indeed, on occasion Wolff steps back and admits—nay, shouts—as much. Speaking to the "crux of the matter," he asks, "How is it that people vastly unworthy, by all evidence and logic, so palpably precarious, are taken so seriously?"

But don't go throwing it away yet. The men and women Wolff is channeling are the people who ultimately decide

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what Americans read, see, and hear in the media. Wolff is famously a little crazy. He revels in personal insults and studied putdowns of the very people to whom he is supposed to be sucking up. And yet one can't be sure that he isn't sucking up at the same time. Wolff manages to confuse even the experts. Sometimes he's a master juggler. Sometimes he's an illusionist, spinning a runaway riff that obscures more than it illuminates. But sometimes he gets it righter than anyone—and he's braver, too; though again, the nature of the beast is that one can never be certain. As he writes of entrepreneurs, with whom he clearly identifies and whose ranks he is so eager to join.

They're always in the process of sucking up to somebody while alienating somebody else (sucking up while alienating down). What's more, they're taking power from somebody else. It's a zero-sum media world: If you're the flavor of the month, somebody else isn't.

Sounds inviting, don't it?

Even between hard covers Wolff gives the appearance of writing whatever comes into his head; but like a runway model dressed in faux grunge, he works hard at the appearance of effortlessness. There is a high-wire aspect to this truth-teller act, because truth is entirely instrumental in Michael's World. But just as you can't tell the players without a scorecard, it's hard to follow the machinations of media moguldom without Wolff's guidance, wrongheaded as it may sometimes be. (One doesn't read Wolff to find out what's true; one reads him to find out what people may think is true; and the act of his writing and publishing it helps make it "true" in this sense—which in the ever pragmatic world of news is the only truth that matters.)

A trivial example: When you read an article in *Business Week* about the trials and tribulations of the AOL Time Warner deal, you think you're reading an article in *Business Week* about the trials and tribulations of the AOL Time Warner deal. Ditto *Fortune* and *The New Yorker*. Wolff finds your naiveté touching. In fact, *Business Week* was the weapon of choice in the arsenal of the AOL chair-

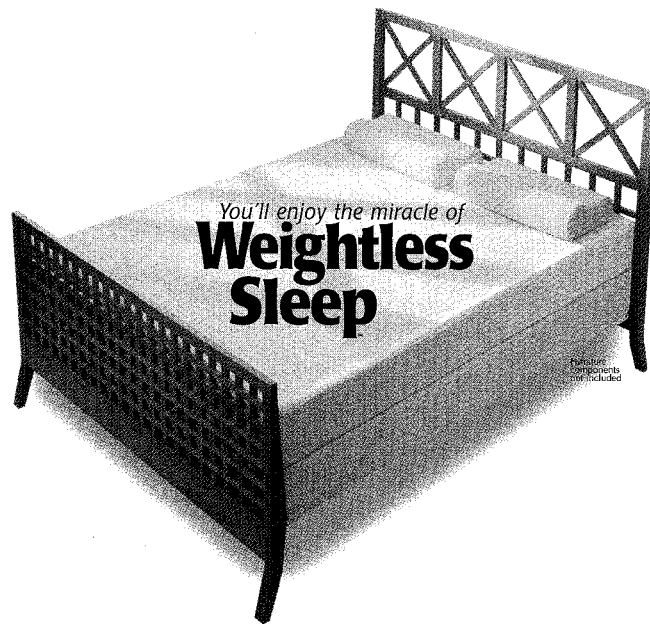
man Steve Case's PR guy, Ken Lerer, to try to knock off Time Warner's Jerry Levin and Richard Parsons. *Fortune*—owned, coincidentally, by Time Warner—was Levin and Parsons's response, through their PR guy, Ed Adler. Adler threw in *The New Yorker*—which employs Wolff's rival (and the much nicer) mogul watcher Ken Auletta—just to make sure the corpse wouldn't get up a second time. As Wolff wrote in the kind of throwaway line for which all media watchers depend on him, "Here is the Talented Mr. Ripley theory about Jerry Levin: He seems harmless enough until he kills you." Come to think of it, it's rather brave of Wolff to have left that sentence in, given that whereas it was perhaps true, it was true only briefly. Levin killed nothing deader than his own career.

Does it all add up? That depends on the meanings of "it," "all," "add," and "up." As I said, there's a reality here to which Wolff is the world's greatest living anthropologist, but it is a reality that is lighter than air. The book's paradigmatic figure, Walter Isaacson, has left the media business altogether for the greener pastures of the Aspen Institute—which, Wolff might say, is the whole point of the book. Rupert Murdoch is treated by Wolff as a near deity, with virtually no mention of the destructive character of his assault on genuinely "fair and balanced" journalism through ideological hatchet jobs and tabloid exploitation of our democracy—which, Wolff might say, is the other whole point. And the book contains an absolutely killer Barry Diller story. That and many others like it, I'm guessing the publishers hope, are the book's final whole point.

Should you, after all that, plunk down your \$25 for a guided tour of Michael's World? Well, that's about one seventh the price of lunch for two at Michael's, and unless you're actually Barry or Sumner or Rupert or Walter or somebody like them, you might get seated in Siberia, where you'll miss all the action anyway. I'd say read it and weep. ▀

Eric Alterman is a Nation columnist, a weblogger for MSNBC.com, and a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. His most recent books are What Liberal Media? (2003) and, with Mark Green, The Book on Bush: How George W. (Mis)leads America (2004).

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REACTIONARY PROPHET

Edmund Burke understood before anyone else that revolutions devour their young—and turn into their opposites

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

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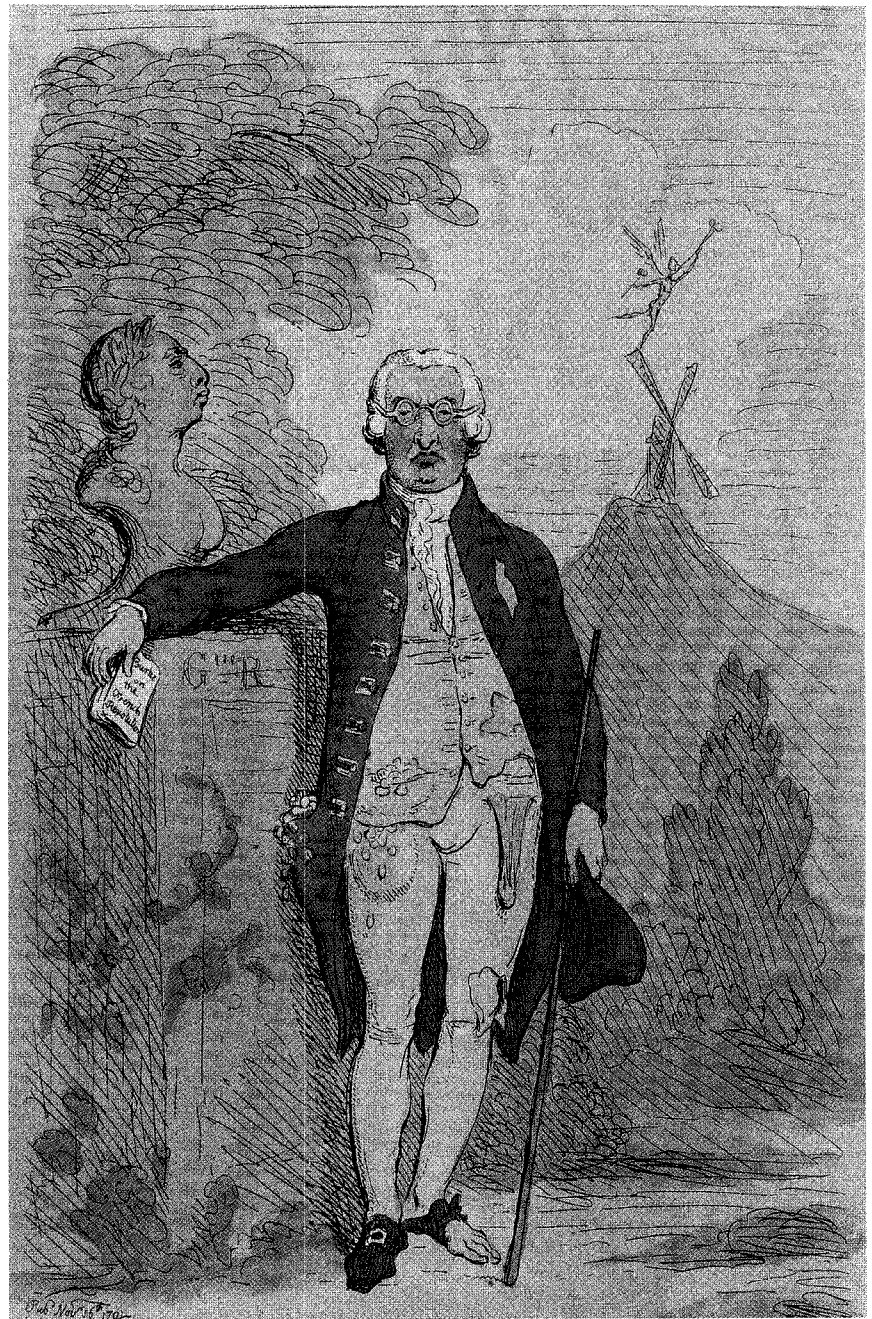
It has always been with me," William Hazlitt wrote, "a test of the sense and candour of any one belonging to the opposite party, whether he allowed Burke to be a great man." Not all radicals have been so generous. In a footnote to Volume One of *Das Kapital*, Karl Marx wrote with contempt of Burke,

The sycophant—who in the pay of the English oligarchy played the romantic *laudator temporis acti* against the French Revolution just as, in the pay of the North American colonies at the beginning of the American troubles, he had played the liberal against the English oligarchy—was an out-and-out vulgar bourgeois.

The old bruiser of the British Museum would not have known that he was echoing a remark by Thomas Jefferson, in a letter written to Benjamin Vaughan in May of 1791.

The Revolution of France does not astonish me so much as the revolution of Mr. Burke. I wish I could believe the latter proceeded from as pure motives as the former ... How mortifying that this evidence of the rottenness of his mind must oblige us now to ascribe to wicked motives those actions of his life which wore the mark of virtue and patriotism.

This attribution of mercenariness to Burke (who had in fact accepted a small pension from the British government for services rendered, and who had also been the London lobbyist or representative of the colony of New York during his defense of the rights of the American colonists) is also to be found in the work of Thomas Paine and Dr. Joseph Priestley. It is a frequent vice of radical polemic to assert, and even to believe, that once you have found the lowest motive for an antagonist, you have identified the correct one. And such reductionism makes a sort of rough partnership



with the simplistic view that Burke was the founder or father of modern conservatism in general, and of its English Tory form in particular.

In point of fact Edmund Burke was neither an Englishman nor a Tory. He was an Irishman, probably a Catholic Irishman at that (even if perhaps a secret sympathizer), and for the greater part of his life he upheld the more liberal principles of the Whig faction. He was an advanced opponent of the slave trade, whose "Sketch of a Negro Code" was written in the early 1780s, and who

before that had opposed the seating of American slaveholders at Westminster.

His epic parliamentary campaign for the impeachment of Warren Hastings and the arraignment of the East India Company was the finest example in its day of a battle *against* pelf and perks and privilege. His writings

on revolution and counter-revolution, and on empire, are ripe for a "Straussian" or Machiavellian reading that seeks to discover the arcane or occluded message contained within an ostensibly straightforward text.

**REFLECTIONS ON
THE REVOLUTION
IN FRANCE:
EDMUND BURKE**
edited by Frank M. Turner
Yale

This is most particularly true of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which has seldom if ever been better analyzed and, so to speak, “decoded” than in this excellent companion edition. One might begin by giving this imperishable book its full name. The original 1790 title page read “Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event: In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris.” The gentleman in question was Charles-Jean-François Depont, a young man of Burke’s acquaintance who had become a member of the French National Assembly and had written to him in the fall of 1789. Burke owed him a reply, which turned into a very long letter indeed after its author had been further inspired to put pen to paper. The further inspiration was supplied by two meetings in London, of the Constitutional Society and of the Revolution Society, at which were passed warm resolutions welcoming the fall of the Bastille. It was, more than anything else, the alarm he felt at these latter developments that impelled Burke to his response. Please note, then, that Burke chose to stress not the French Revolution but “The Revolution in France.” He seems to have intended, here, to speak of the phenomenon of revolution as it applied to French affairs, and as it might be made to apply to English ones. Hence the emphatic mention of “certain societies in London.”

The Revolution Society was not as insurgent or incendiary as its name might suggest. It was a rather respectable sodality, dedicated to celebrating the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, a relatively bloodless coup that installed William and Mary of the House of Orange on the English throne, and established Protestantism as the state religion. One of the society’s leaders was the Reverend Richard Price, a great friend to the American Revolution and a staunch Unitarian clergyman. His resolution, carried by the same meeting that had forwarded a “Congratulatory Address” to the National Assembly in Paris, read in part, “This Society, sensible of the important advantages arising to this Country

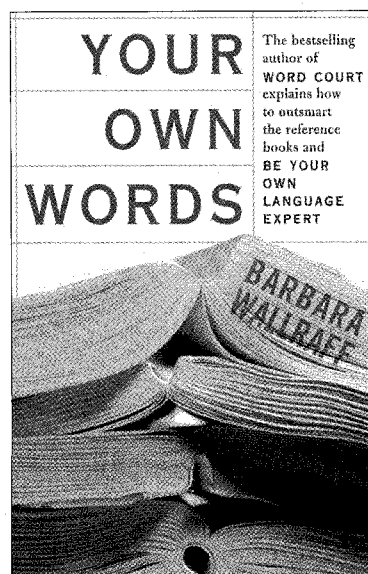
by its deliverance from Popery and Arbitrary Power ...”

It was made immediately plain to Burke that those who had enthused over revolution across the Channel were also interested in undermining and discrediting the same Church that he—an Irishman brought up under anti-Catholic penal laws—felt so obliged to defend. (This deep connection has been established by Conor Cruise O’Brien in a masterly series of studies that began with his own edition of the *Reflections* in 1968.) But the point is not a merely sectarian one. In 1780 London had been convulsed and shamed by the hysterical anti-Papist Gordon Riots, in which a crazed aristocratic demagogue had led a mob against supposedly subversive Catholics. (The best evocation of the fury and cruelty of that episode is to be found in Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge*.) This memory was very vivid in Burke’s mind, and goes far to explain his visceral detestation of crowd violence. No less to the point, some emulators of Jacobinism—the United Irishmen, with many Protestants among their leaders—were at work in Ireland trying to bring off a rebellion that would compromise all parliamentary “moderates.” And several of the pro-Jacobin activists and spokesmen in England, not excluding the rather humane Price himself, had had political connections with Lord George Gordon. As between the Jacobite and the Jacobin, Burke could not be neutral for an instant; he might give up the Jacobite cause out of loyalty to the British crown, but he was profoundly stirred when he saw old-fashioned anti-Catholicism renaissance under potentially republican colors. So one does well to keep *Barnaby Rudge* in mind along with *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Three questions will occur to anybody reconsidering the *Reflections* today. Was it a grand and prophetic indictment of revolutionary excess? Was it the disdainful shudder of a man who despised or feared what at one stage he described as the “swinish multitude”? And did it contain what we would now term a “hidden agenda”? The answer to all three questions, it seems to me, is a

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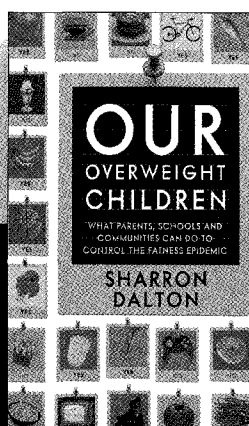
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firm yes. Let us take the two most celebrated excerpts of Burke's extraordinary prose. The first is the prescient one.

It is known; that armies have hitherto yielded a very precarious and uncertain obedience to any senate, or popular authority; and they will least of all yield it to an assembly which is only to have a continuance of two years. The officers must totally lose the characteristic disposition of military men, if they see with perfect submission and due admiration, the dominion of pleaders; especially when they find that they have a new court to pay to an endless succession of those pleaders; whose military policy, and the genius of whose command, (if they should have any,) must be as uncertain as their duration is transient. In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of an army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself. Armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment in which that event shall happen, the person who really commands the army is your master; the master (that is little) of your king, the master of your Assembly, the master of your whole republic.

This is almost eerily exact. Even in the solitary detail in which it does not body forth the actual coming of Napoleon Bonaparte (who did not emerge until well after the execution of King Louis), it takes care to state that the subordination of existing monarchy would be the least of it. There is only one comparably Cassandra-like prediction that I can call to mind, and that is Rosa Luxemburg's warning to Lenin that revolution can move swiftly from the dictatorship of a class to the dictatorship of a party, to be followed by the dictatorship of a committee of that party and eventually by the rule of a single man who will soon enough dispense with that committee.

Contrast this with Burke's even more famous passage about the fragrance and charisma of Marie Antoinette.

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then

the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

One has read this passage very many times (I shall never forget the first time I heard it read out loud, by a Tory headmaster), and its meaning and majesty appear to alter with one's mood and evolution. "The unbought grace of life" is a most arresting phrase, however opaque, just as "the cheap defence of nations" remains unintelligible. The gallantry, and the appeal to chivalry, can sometimes seem like "the last enchantments of the Middle Age," breathing with an incomparable melancholy and resignation. Alternatively, the entire stave can be held to rank with the most preposterous and empurpled sentimentality ever committed to print—not to be rivaled until the moist,

vapid effusions that greeted the death of Diana Spencer, also in Paris, in a banal traffic accident.

The latter view, or something very like it, was the one expressed by Burke's friend and confidant Philip Francis, to whom he had sent the draft and the proofs. The friendship more or less ended when Francis replied,

In my opinion all that you say of the Queen is pure foppery. If she be a perfect female character you ought to take your ground upon her virtues. If she be the reverse it is ridiculous in any but a Lover, to place her personal charms in opposition to her crimes. Either way I know the argument must proceed upon a supposition; for neither have you said anything to establish her moral merits, nor have her accusers formally tried and convicted her of guilt.

The gash that this inflicted on Burke was not a shallow one: he had admired Philip Francis ever since the latter took an active part in the defense of the rights of India and the consequent impeachment of Warren Hastings. Francis, moreover, was one of the most feared and skillful pamphleteers of the day, writing excoriating letters under the pseudonym "Junius"—whose identity Burke was one of few to guess. (I can't resist pointing out here that Rosa Luxemburg wrote her most famous pamphlet under the same *nom de guerre*. I do so not just to make a connection that hasn't been observed before but because "Junius" is taken from Lucius Junius Brutus, not the Shakespearean regicide but the hero and founder of the Roman republic.) Not content with taunting Burke about his emotional spasm over Marie Antoinette, Francis urged him in effect to give up the whole project; and when it was finally published in spite of this advice, he wrote Burke a letter in which he coupled "the Church" with "that religion in short, which was practised or professed, and with great Zeal too, by tyrants and villains of every denomination." This English Voltaireanism had the effect of spurring Burke to an even more heated defense of the alliance of religion with order and property. To him, the alleged "deism" of the revolutionaries was a shabby mask for iconoclastic atheism. Nor did he care much

for the then fashionable chatter about liberty and "rights." As he stated early in the *Reflections*,

Am I to congratulate an highwayman and murderer, who has broke prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the galleys, and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysic knight of the sorrowful countenance.

In other words, Burke was quite ready to anticipate, or to meet, any charge of quixotism. This did not prevent Thomas Paine from responding that "in the rhapsody of his imagination, he has discovered a world of windmills, and his sorrows are, that there are no Quixotes to attack them."

Paine's reply, to the *Reflections* in general and to the paean to Marie Antoinette in particular, is no less celebrated. In mourning the plumage, he wrote in *Rights of Man*, Burke forgot the dying bird. It is true, as O'Brien has pointed out, that this statement has since been employed by many pitiless revolutionaries to justify their less tasteful or unscrupulous actions, and that it can be made to rank with the omelet and the eggs as a remark that is dismissive and callous when applied to a "mere" individual. Indeed, in his essay in this edition O'Brien proposes Burke as the moral ancestor of all those who have warned until the present day of the awfulness of absolutist revolutions and of the terrifying results that ensue from any scheme for human perfectibility.

However, Paine—who also disliked the "mob," and who described Lord George Gordon as a "madman"—was to take a much more considerable risk, in theory and practice, to assure humane treatment for the plumage. As a deputy in the French National Convention for the district of Pas de Calais, he spoke out strongly against the execution of King Louis. He did so first because of the way in which royalist France had come to the aid of the American Revolution. (Some historians, including Simon Schama, now maintain that the expense of this commitment led to the emptying of the French treasury, and thus to the original crisis of bankruptcy that precip-

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itated the events of 1789.) He did so second because he could see that measures of revenge were likely to coarsen the French revolutionary regime. And he did so third because of an inborn revulsion against capital punishment, which he had seen practiced with the utmost brutality by the British authorities. The taking of these positions (and let us not forget that the vote on the execution of King Louis almost resulted in a tie) involved him in a very tough parliamentary confrontation with none other than Jean Paul Marat, who denounced Paine as a Quaker and a foreigner and ignited the train of suspicion and paranoia that would land Paine in a foul-smelling Parisian cell under sentence of death. It was in such circumstances that Paine composed *The Age of Reason*. In that book, as is often forgotten, he tried to vindicate deism against atheism, and certainly

wished to keep the French Revolution from becoming too bloody and fanatical. Like Jefferson and Lafayette, he had a not-so-hidden motive: to expand and consolidate a system that might rescue the new American republic from isolation. Along with Lafayette, he suffered considerable persecution and contumely from French hard-liners as a result.

Professor John Keane has reminded us, in his 1995 biography of Paine, that there was a time when Burke and Paine were friends. Burke accompanied Paine on some trips into the English countryside, in search of a site for Paine's newly designed iron bridge. Both were suspicious of arbitrary power ("We hunt in pairs," Burke once joked), and Paine had no reason to doubt that Burke, in his *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents* (1770), had been sincere in his

Was Burke's *Reflections* a prophetic indictment of revolutionary excess? Or the disdainful shudder of a man who feared the "swinish multitude"? And did it contain a "hidden agenda"? The answer to all three questions is yes.

succeeded in disproving Burke's crude contention that this was a distinction without a difference. For Paine, the Robespierrean annexation of religious property was not at all a separation between Church and State but, rather, a nationalizing by the State of the Church. That may be a more radical and useful objection than Burke's furious refusal to regard the least trespass on ecclesiastical power as anything but profane or obscene.

The chief weakness of this volume is its refusal to take Paine at all seriously, or to consider whether he, too, might not have been defending one revolution in his own way in order to safeguard another. O'Brien has established to most people's satisfaction that Burke pleaded the cause of the American colonists, and indignantly denounced the French Revolution, because he hoped in this way to make the case for reform in Ireland and knew how far he could go. Paine, who had wanted the American Revolution to go further than it did (in the abolition of slavery, for example),

liberal belief that it was corrupt authority, not protest against it, that required justification. The astonishment Paine expresses in *Rights of Man* at Burke's refusal to criticize or even to enumerate the crimes and cruelties of the *ancien régime* is clearly genuine. So is his scorn at Burke's concept of the franchise as a reward for property and piety. (Until Paine tried to salvage it, the term "democracy"—like the words "Tory" and, later, "suffragette" and "impressionist"—had been deployed only as an insult.) Paine was a Newtonian and a believer in economic growth and modern technique; Burke was a prisoner of the feudal and the landed conception of society, who employed the words "innovation" and "despotism" as virtual twins. Notice, for example, how the word "economist" in the Marie Antoinette passage is used as a synonym for knavery. Paine was for a written constitution and a carefully designed welfare state (adumbrated in the second half of *Rights of Man*), whereas Burke was for the semi-mystical "unwritten constitution" of a Crowned

Parliament, and spared few thoughts even for the deserving poor.

However often one awards the winning of the longer-term argument to Paine, the fact remains that he and Jefferson and Lafayette never even dreamed of the advent of Bonapartism. They all believed, at the time that the argument was actually taking place, that France would become a constitutional monarchy, or had actually become one already. It was Burke who took this romantic delusion—a delusion shared by Charles James Fox and the leaders of Burke's own Whig party, and even for a time by William Pitt and the more pragmatic Tories—and mercilessly exploded it. He also showed that the outcome of the French Revolution would be war on a continental scale. The tremendous power of the *Reflections* lies in this, the first serious argument that revolutions devour their own children and turn into their own opposites.

Indeed, Marx might have paid a little more attention to Burke in drawing his conclusion that the French events of 1789 were the harbinger chiefly of a bourgeois revolution.

Burke's attachment to the old order at least allowed him to see this with exemplary clarity. He wrote,

If this monster of a constitution can continue, France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors of assignats and trustees for the sale of church lands, attorneys, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy, founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people. Here end all the deceitful dreams and visions of the equality and rights of men.

In a similar piece of magnificent disdain for what English aristocrats used to call "trade," he made another penetrating observation about the kinship between tradition and the social contract.

The state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern ... it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each

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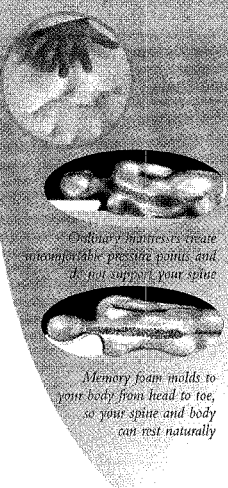
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contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place.

Again, one has to peel away the layers of holy awe with which Burke protected the idea of an ordained social and moral hierarchy, and the complacency of the hereditary principle in general. But something essential in him, not all of it attributable to his political allegiances, rebelled at the notion of a society *begun anew*—a place where humanity should begin from scratch. This is of huge importance, because Paine and Jefferson very adamantly took the view that only the living had any rights. "Man has no property in man," Paine wrote, making what could have been a very fine argument against slavery but going on to say,

Neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. The parliament or the people of 1688, or of any other period, has no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind or to control them *in any shape whatever*, than the parliament or the people of the present day have to dispose of, bind or control those who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence. Every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated.

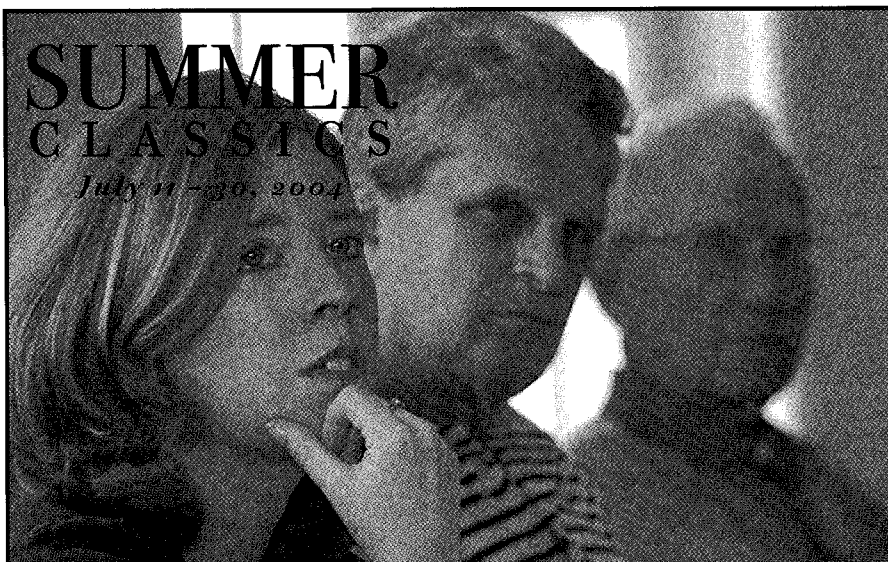
Thus the French calendar that began the human story over again, or that at least tried to rewind its odometer. Thus Jefferson's notorious 1793 letter to William Short, stating that he had rather "seen half the earth desolated; were there but an Adam and Eve left in every country," than see the French Revolution defeated. A little stretch is required to derive the Khmer Rouge "Year Zero" from this; but those who are willing to be millennial about origins will sometimes be millennial about consequences. Yet such hectic and short-term radical enthusiasm is distinctly odd in one way, since both Paine and Jefferson derived many of their claims of liberty from supposedly ancestral

Saxon institutions that predated the Norman Conquest, and since Paine can hardly have been unaware that in challenging the 1688 revolution, he was pushing at an open door as far as Burke was concerned. Equally extraordinary is the implied lack of any duty toward future generations, which revolutionaries at all times have claimed to stand for. If modern conservatism can be held to derive from Burke, it is not just because he appealed to property owners in behalf of stability but also because he appealed to an everyday interest in the preservation of the ancestral and the immemorial. And the abolition of memory, as we have come to know in our own time, is an aspect of the totalitarian that spares neither right nor left. In the cult of "now," just as in the making of Reason into an idol, the writhings of nihilism are to be detected.

It is vastly to the credit of Conor Cruise O'Brien that he still feels it necessary to defend Burke from the charge of being a "reactionary." It may not be feasible to make this extenuation a consistent one. Burke was strongly in favor of repressive measures at home, including the silencing of all dissent. In calling for an all-out war, he outdid William Pitt himself. He died before the worst of the Bonapartist project for Europe was revealed, and it cannot easily be said that his gravest fears in this respect did not materialize. But in his discussion of the French *philosophes* he declined even to cite any of their secular and rationalist critique, because, as he put it in a footnote to *Reflections*, "I do not choose to shock the feeling of the moral reader with any quotation of their vulgar, base, and profane language." That's Tory pomposity defined. Furthermore, and as Darrin McMahon points out in his chapter of this edition, Burke in the year of his death (1797) wrote to the exiled Abbé Barruel to thank him in the most profuse terms for a copy of his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*. This was a work, infamous in its time, of the most depraved and retrograde Jesuitism, which purported to find a grand conspiracy of Freemasons and other subversives in the overthrow of the Bourbons. Burke's letter was no mere courtesy; it lauded

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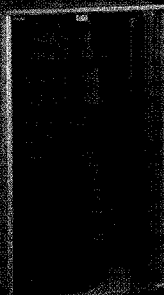


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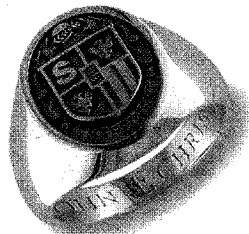
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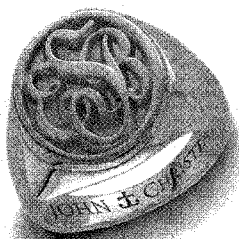
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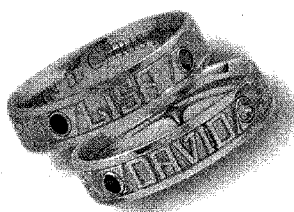
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the *abbé* for his justice, regularity, and exactitude. This is the only charge against Burke that I cannot find mentioned or dealt with in Conor Cruise O'Brien's tremendous biography *The Great Melody*; but as O'Brien has observed in another context, those intellectuals who will not give up "civility" and "objectivity" for the cause of revolution have sometimes been observed to sacrifice these qualities for the sake of the counter-revolution. Clearly, Burke saw himself as willing to try all means and all alliances in order to "contain" revolutionary France, lest it pose a challenge similar to that presented by the Protestant Reformation, and then as far as possible to destroy it.

By 1815 that project might have been accounted a success. But the idea of the French Revolution managed to survive the Duke of Wellington and Prince Metternich as well as the literary power of Edmund Burke. The trinity of "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*" outlived those who had butchered in its name, and was deposed from the French currency only during the time of Vichy (which replaced it with the less sonorous "*travail, famille, patrie*"). Lafayette lived long enough to take part in the anti-Bourbon revolution of 1830. Paine died ruined and disappointed, yet his opinions resurfaced in the movement for the franchise that eventually defeated the Duke of Wellington's government. And Thomas Jefferson was able to double the land area of the United States of America. The terms of the Louisiana Purchase would not have been available had it not been for a slave revolt in Haiti, inspired by the ideals and proclamations of 1789, that annihilated Napoleon's fleet and army and put an end to French ambitions in the hemisphere. What might Burke have made of this momentous insurrection, later so brilliantly described by C.L.R. James? One recurs to Hazlitt's generous judgment when one wishes to have read Burke on what happened when Jacobinism crossed the Atlantic and became black. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair. His book A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq was published last fall.

REFLECTIONS
TRUE TO HIS WORDS

BY ROBERT VARE

.....

A year ago this month Michael Kelly, a former editor in chief of The Atlantic, died in Iraq while on assignment for the magazine. A collection of Kelly's writings, Things Worth Fighting For, will be published in April by the Penguin Press. The editor of that volume remembers his colleague and friend as a writer and as a man.

At the time of his tragic death, at forty-six, Michael Kelly had already packed several lifetimes' worth of accomplishments and triumphs into a relatively short career. His membership in the Fourth Estate spanned two decades, but it was only during the last thirteen years of his life that he truly came into his own as a journalist, producing a body of work that is remarkable for its variety, incisiveness, wit, literary grace, and enduring value.

In the course of those thirteen years Mike somehow managed to cover three wars and two presidential campaigns; to write laceratingly honest, state-of-the-art profiles of seminal political figures of our time; to produce—as a prolific reporter for the Washington bureau of *The New York Times*, as the sole staff writer of *The New York Times Magazine*, and as the author of the “Letter From Washington” for *The New Yorker*—a string of landmark campaign reports, White House chronicles, and cover stories that raised the level of political writing to literature; to turn out a wide-ranging, at times slashing, syndicated weekly column, first for *The New Republic* and then for *The Washington Post*; and to be, successively, the editor of three magazines: first *The New Republic*, then *National Journal*, and, most recently, *The Atlantic Monthly*. All in thirteen years: an extraordinary period of fecundity and journalistic adventurousness.

Mike's beat stretched from Capitol Hill to the concrete-and-sheet-metal headquarters of the Militia of Montana, from the battlefields of Iraq to the beaches of Cape May. To review his entire body of work is to be struck most strongly by

the sheer breadth of his reporting and writing, his expansive palette of subjects and styles. He had not only a wide range of abiding interests and passions—politics, foreign affairs, war reporting, how we Americans live now, the adventures of his two young sons—but also a full



panoply of literary gifts: for physical description and scene-setting; for the satirical insight, the precise image, and the transformative detail.

In retrospect, the magazine-profile form seems to have sparked the making of Mike as a writer. After a brief tour of duty as a booker at ABC's *Good Morning America*, he started out as a newspaper-

man at the *Cincinnati Post* and the *Baltimore Sun*, covering a bright young reporter's fair share of worthy stories—the Midwest farm crisis, the Iran-contra hearings, Michael Dukakis's 1988 presidential campaign. But after seven years of daily deadlines and newswriting formulas Mike was ready to work on a broader canvas and to liberate his rapidly developing voice. In 1990, as a freelance writer for *GQ* magazine, he burst onto the national stage with profiles of two political mandarins, each of whom had

been much written about over the years but never; it is safe to say, with such bold brushstrokes and unsparing intimacy.

“Up close, the face is a shock,” begins Mike's word picture of Senator Ted Kennedy's descent into alcohol, gluttony, and philandering (“Ted Kennedy on the Rocks”).

The skin has gone from red roses to gin blossoms ... The Chiclet teeth are the color of old piano keys ... There is a great desire to remember him as we remember his brothers. The Dorian Grays of Hyannis Port, John and Robert, have perpetual youth and beauty and style, and their faces are mirrors of all that is better and classier and richer than us. Ted is the reality, the fifty-seven-year-old living picture of a man who has feasted on too much for too long with too little restraint, the visible proof that nothing exceeds like excess.

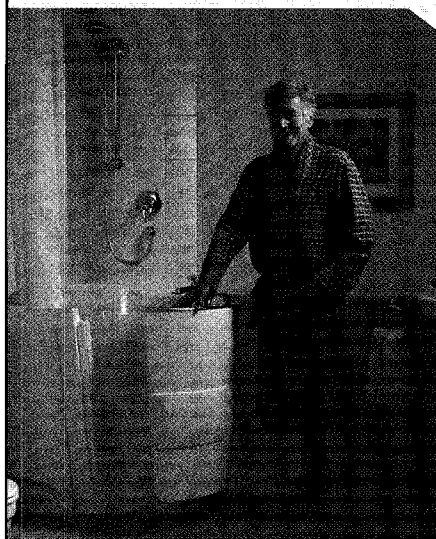
Mike was equally sharp-edged in his assessment of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who, in “The Midlife Crisis of Jesse Jackson,” emerges as an unexpectedly forlorn figure, consigned by his voracious need for the camera and the reporter's notebook to the distant margins of real political power. “Jesse Louis Jackson is forty-nine years old and suffering from a midlife crisis,” Mike wrote.

It is not the usual sort, not a tremor of waning libido or of looming mortality. It is a crisis of relevance. Relevance is the base of all that Jackson has. His extraordinary career rests on the strength of his great talent for seizing the moment, for being in the right place at the right time and shouting the right thing. This skill has made him America's fore-

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most political celebrity ... And yet, all
of a sudden, there is an awkward feel-
ing in the air. A scent of So What. A
strong whiff of Who Cares.

In both these political icons, with
their outsize abilities, ambitions, and
flaws, Mike early on found one of his
true subjects, a grand theme he would
return to again and again for the re-
mainder of his writing life: the compli-
cated relationship between talent and
character. In the feet of clay of Ted
Kennedy and Jesse Jackson, he began
to find his own literary footing.

The Persian Gulf War, in 1991, rep-
resented another—perhaps even more
crucial—turning point in Mike's evolu-
tion as a writer. As the prospect of war
grew more certain, he managed to cadge
assignments from several publications,
most notably *The New Republic*, one of
whose editors issued a challenge: "We'll
use your stuff if you can be in Baghdad
when the bombs drop." Mike hightailed
it to the Middle East, borrowing \$8,000
to cover travel costs, and after securing
an ordinary tourist visa from the Iraqi
embassy in Jordan, arrived in Baghdad
two weeks before the war started. At that
point he was one of only a few Western
journalists in the Iraqi capital. For those
in the media, the Gulf War was alto-
gether a different experience from the
Iraq War of 2003. In the earlier conflict
the Pentagon had sought to stifle first-
hand reporting, barring all but a small
number of pool reporters from access to
the action. While most of his colleagues
covered Operation Desert Storm from the
safe remove of press briefing rooms in
Saudi Arabia, Mike defied the Pentagon
ban and went off on his own. "Doing a
unilateral," the press corps called it.

Out of this act of journalistic inde-
pendence came transcendence. Criss-
crossing Iraq, Kuwait, and several other
countries in rented and borrowed cars
(once even hitching a ride on an Egyp-
tian tank), Mike filed one electrifying dis-
patch after another: "Before the Storm,"
in which he documented the hollow
bravado of Iraqis awaiting the start of
war in cafés, at the theater, and at the
racetrack; "The Other Hell," a searing
portrayal of the deplorable refugee camp
in Iran where hordes of Kurds had been
forced to flee after their abandonment

by the Bush Administration; and "Kiss of
Victory," with its utterly bizarre, serio-
comic scene, worthy of the movie
*M*A*S*H*, in which ten Iraqi soldiers,
retreating across the Kuwaiti desert, in-
sisted on surrendering as prisoners of
war to Mike and another reporter.

On the eve of the Gulf War many
journalists were predicting a protracted
campaign (*another Vietnam!*), but Mike
was one of the few to understand the
quantum leaps in warfare technology
that the U.S. military had achieved dur-
ing the previous decade. In a dispatch
depicting the staggering firepower un-
leashed over Baghdad in the first hours
of the campaign ("Blitzed"), he saw
"scenes of incandescent hysteria and
beauty, the tracer shells tracking lovely
curves, and S's and parabolas of orange-
red light against the backdrop of a
black-out city skyline."

And yet as spot on as Mike was in
writing about cruise missiles and mili-
tary strategy, the signal achievement of
his front-line reports lay in their capac-
ity to evoke what the renowned war
correspondent Martha Gellhorn called
"the face of war"—the human suffering
and destruction in all its horrifying detail.
Nothing exemplifies this more hauntingly
than the following passage from "High-
way to Hell," Mike's *Guernica*-like evo-
cation of a two-lane road running from
Kuwait to Iraq that American bombers
had turned into an open graveyard for
fleeing Iraqi soldiers (and that he was
one of the first journalists to discover).

Even in a mass attack, there is indi-
viduality. Quite a few of the dead had
never made it out of their machines.
Those were the worst, because they
were both exploded and incinerated.
One man had tried to escape to Iraq
in a Kawasaki front-end loader. His
remaining half body lay hanging up-
side down and out of his exposed
seat, the left side and bottom blown
away to tatters, with the charred leg
fully fifteen feet away. Nine men in a
slat-sided supply truck were killed
and flash-burned so swiftly that they
remained, naked, skinned, and black
wrecks, in the vulnerable positions of
the moment of first impact. One body
lay face down with his rear high in
the air, as if he had been trying to
burrow through the truckbed. His
legs ended in fluttery charcoaled rem-
nants at mid thigh. He had a young,

pretty face, slightly cherubic, with a pointed little chin; you could still see that even though it was mummified. Another man had been butterflyed by the bomb; the cavity of his body was cut wide open and his intestines and such were still coiled in their proper places, but cooked to ebony.

The emotional impact of this passage comes not just from the careful selection of photographic images but from their organization and pacing. Mike slows down the tempo, his eye lingering over each victim, and that makes the death tableau even more heartbreaking. The quiet restraint of his language also intensifies the feeling of moral urgency. When Mike's Gulf War dispatches won a National Magazine Award for reporting, the following year, the judges saluted him for getting "the war story that colleagues missed." The citation for the Overseas Press Club Award, which he also won that year, called his work "understated and beautifully crafted—a profound meditation on the depths of human cruelty." Out of these Gulf War dispatches, revised and expanded, would come a much heralded gem of a book: *Martyrs' Day: Chronicle of a Small War* (1993). All this was a feat made even more impressive by the fact that Mike had never before written anything remotely like these dispatches, with their full sensory reports of the sights and sounds and smells of war. "I don't know what it was, but my reporting faculties had never been engaged like that," Mike told me years later. "I was just seeing everything—even the tiniest thing—large and in Technicolor. I think it was partly the fear, partly the sheer excitement of being there and bearing witness, and partly my growing anger at what Saddam Hussein had done."

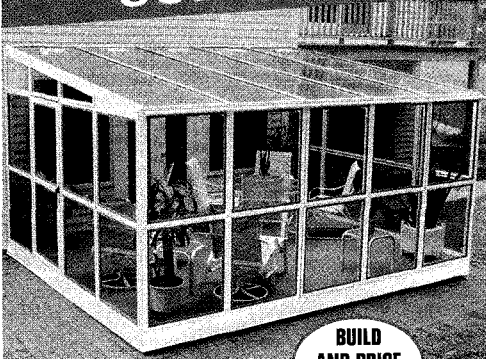
I first met Michael Kelly in the fall of 1991, a few months after he had returned from the Middle East. As an editor then at *The New York Times Magazine*, I'd been a faithful reader of the *New Republic* dispatches and the *GQ* profiles, and had been recruiting him with more than a little ardor. We met for lunch at a hotel restaurant a couple of blocks from the *Times* building, and right off the bat there were two surprises. For one thing, given the courageousness of his war reporting and the gusto

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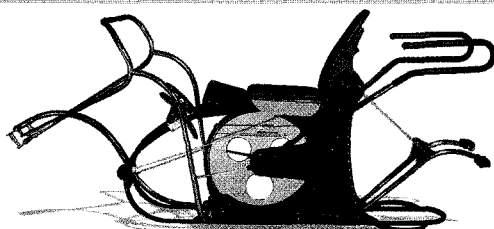
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with which he'd dismantled a series of political eminences, I was expecting a much larger man (even with his thick mop of curly brown hair, Mike was all of five-six). For another, given the fire in his writing voice, I was taken aback by how soft-spoken he was in person. Although the words tumbled easily out of his mouth in complete sentences, even complete paragraphs, the volume was that of a man speaking in church. For all his heroics and journalistic success, there was not an ounce of swagger or self-importance about him as he spoke of his work and his life.

Journalism was in his blood, he said. His mother, Marguerite Kelly, had for many years written a column on parenting for *The Washington Post*, called "Family Almanac"; his father, Tom Kelly, was a longtime reporter for *The Washington Daily News* (now defunct) and had written a book on *The Washington Post*. Mike's round, puckish face (which to me instantly registered Cagney, but with spectacles) lit up when he talked about his parents and growing up with three sisters in a rambling Victorian house a few blocks from the Capitol. The house was a hubbub of activity, he said, with his sisters' friends dropping by, and neighbors coming and going, and, after sunset, newspaper people and other writers gathering in the family parlor for marathon sessions of food, drink, and talk. "It was good talk," Mike said. "It was about politics and politicians and stories and writing. I pretty much always knew I wanted to be a reporter."

His mother, who was from New Orleans and reflected it in her approach to life, had an internal clock that was untethered to conventional conceptions of time. "If you're invited to my mother's house for dinner at, say, eight P.M., odds are you won't sit down to eat till after eleven o'clock," Mike told me. "But you don't care, because you're having too much fun." A decade later, in one of his *Washington Post* columns celebrating family life, called "Growing Up With Mr. Fixit," he paid equal tribute to his father's eccentricities.

My father, Tom Kelly, is seventy-eight, and he has four grown children, and they have had their ups and downs. And over all the years, for every up,

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my father has been there to say how splendid (and how deserved) was this particular up; and for every down, he has been there to say how splendid (though not at all deserved) was this particular down.

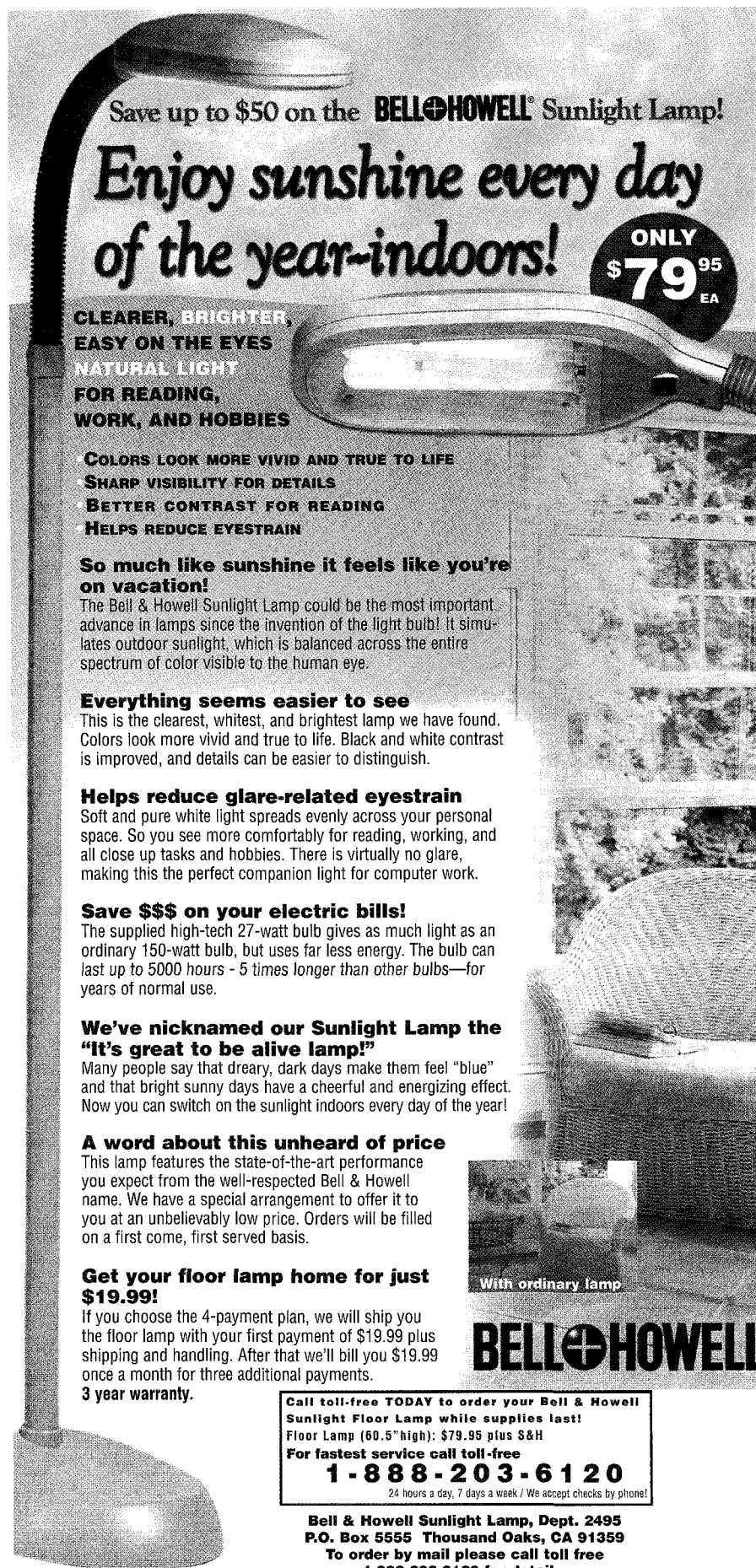
An insane love, a failed grade, a lost job—there is nothing that befalls one of his children in which my father is not able to find “a marvelous experience.”

At lunch Mike admitted that despite many years of Jesuit schooling, he wasn't much of a student. Unlike most of his journalistic peers, who could boast of brand-name colleges on their résumés, he had attended a state school, the University of New Hampshire. “I don't remember much about it because of all the drinking and partying I was doing there,” he told me. “I edited the campus newspaper and may have written a piece now and then.”

As a reporter for the Baltimore *Sun*, Mike had gained a measure of notoriety for his pranks—squirting in successive years Fawn Hall, of Iran-contra fame, and Donna Rice, the woman who'd brought down Gary Hart's presidential campaign, to the ultra-clubby White House Correspondents' Dinner. I asked him what it was like to have had on his arm two of the more infamous femmes fatales of the 1980s. “The best part was seeing the stricken faces of the wheezy old denizens of the press corps,” he said. The glint in his eye suggested that these stunts had not, by any means, depleted his reserves of mischief. (Years later he came to regret his inadvertent but apparently key role in turning the correspondents' dinner into an unabashed celeb fest.)

We talked about ideas for the *Times Magazine* (he was a fount of them), but he was not going to be able to take on an assignment anytime soon. He was still at work on *Martyrs' Day*, and he was about to be married to Madelyn Greenberg, a producer for CNN (and later for CBS News), whom he had met during the Dukakis campaign. He was thrilled about the upcoming marriage to “Max,” as he affectionately called her.

Many of Mike's ideas about writing, he told me, had come down to him from his father: the emphasis on legwork and physical description, the importance of pacing in establishing mood and keeping readers engaged, the overarching need to



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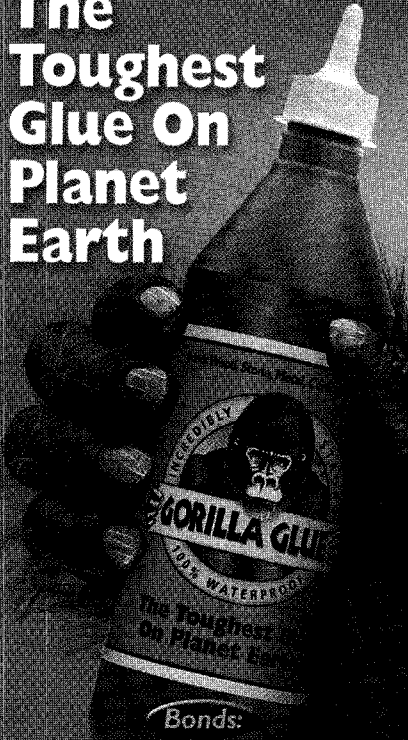
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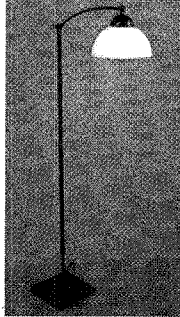
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see subjects afresh. Tom Kelly had a reverence for the atmosphere of the old-fashioned newsroom and for the classic turn-of-the-century newspaper sketch. He had introduced his son to some of the pioneers of the newspaper narrative—Stephen Crane, Jack London, Richard Harding Davis—and also to many other writers who, over several generations, had artfully married the meticulous accumulation of fact with the storytelling techniques of fiction. Whenever Mike talked about his literary heroes, the two names that tended to come up first were George Orwell and A. J. Liebling. He admired both writers for their exacting sense of detail, their clarity of expression, and their ability to build scenes and take in events as they were actually happening.

One passage in particular, from Liebling's famous *The Earl of Louisiana*, had left an indelible mark on Mike. For that story Liebling had gone down to Louisiana in midsummer of 1959 to cover the re-election campaign of Governor Earl Long, the younger brother of the former governor Huey Long, and a figure of equally exaggerated appetites and idiosyncrasies. Early in the book Liebling set a scene at a campaign stop on a night so hot that it felt like "a heavy blanket pressed down on the lawn." Although spectators and other politicians on the platform were nearly fainting from the heat, Earl Long—who always insisted that despite all evidence to the contrary, Louisiana had only the best of climates—refused to doff his jacket and tie as he delivered a characteristically tub-thumping speech. The only concession he made to the elements was to interrupt his oration from time to time and, as Liebling wrote, "wipe the sweat from his face with a handkerchief soaked in Coca-Cola."

"I have never forgotten that moment," Mike told me at lunch, pantomiming the gesture with a glass of water that was on our table. "That single image told you almost everything you needed to know about that event, about Louisiana politics, and about Earl Long."

Michael Kelly's own Coca-Cola moments infuse his writing. He found, for example, in Bill Clinton's ever

morphing smile a perfect symbol for the unsettling pliability of a President and his policies ("A Man Who Wants to Be Liked, and Is"). In the devastation of postwar Kuwait he spotted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reinstalling gold bathroom fixtures in the looted palace of a Kuwaiti prince while people in the street went without food, water, and medicine ("Rolls-Royce Revolutionaries"). And he was able to capture a Keystone Kops scene—one that comically exemplified the shaky rule of Yasir Arafat—when the Palestinian leader's security detail tried to emulate the American Secret Service ("Arafat Bombs on Opening Night").

As the motorcade moved slowly away, several of Arafat's senior bodyguards—middle-aged men of considerable heft—leaped upon the rear trunk of his Mercedes, holding on to the car with one hand while they brandished Kalashnikovs with the other ... But Arafat's car lacked hand grips ... and as the Mercedes gathered speed it hit a small bump, sending fat men flying through the air, their bulky forms describing jumbled parabolas of arms and legs and Kalashnikovs, to land with thuds and oaths on the road.

Mike "had enviable eyes," Leon Wieseltier, *The New Republic's* literary editor, has said. "He observed more in a glance than other reporters did in a week."

Voice was also a distinctive Kelly gift. His prose can be softly lyrical, as in his columns chronicling family life, or it can be fiery, hectoring, even Old Testament wrathful, especially in regard to the conduct of Bill Clinton. It can be gently ironic, as in an imaginary letter from Bush père to Bush fils over the selection of Dick Cheney as Vice President ("But What About Dad?"), or blisteringly caustic—turning "a Mencken-like blowtorch" (in the phrase of one *Boston Globe* reporter) on Washington insiders, knee-jerk liberals, the pseudo-hip, the pierced and tattooed, and 1960s time-warp refugees. He could summon pure passion about the problems of black America ("A National Calamity") or, when the mood struck, conjure a pitch-perfect parody that laid waste to the self-important (former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich and his book *Locked in the Cabinet*, in "The Reich Stuff") and the fake (Al

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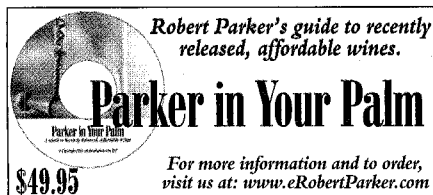
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Core's dubious claims of an agrarian boyhood, in "Farmer Al"). Mike's voice was a musical instrument that he played in many different keys.

Corrosive wit was perhaps the most conspicuous Kelly trademark—writing punctuated by memorable lines and withering turns of phrase.

Ross Perot made his way onto the national stage, barking like a dog and occasionally biting off small pieces of himself. ["That's Entertainment"]

You would think that a man [Robert McNamara] who had given the world the Edsel, flexible response, and the war in Vietnam would stop to consider whether he was really cut out for executive work. ["A Plea for Diversity"]

As a people, we [Americans] have never been this fat. Probably no people has ever been this fat. We are billowing immensities of avoidupois, great, soft bins of finest quality lard, a nation of wide loads wallowing down the highway of life. ["Cirth of a Nation"]

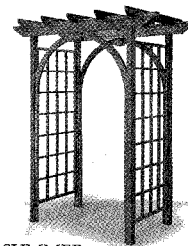
Then there is the whole separate category of acerbity directed at William Jefferson Clinton: "Mr. Clinton tends to run to poundage—his slow and lumbering morning run seems an act of contrition rather than of grace" ("A Man Who Wants to Be Liked, and Is"); "Bill Clinton was perceptive enough to master politics, but not perceptive enough to see what politics was doing to him" ("The President's Past"). Or consider these lines from the classic "I Believe" column:

I believe the president. I have always believed him. I believed him when he said he had never been drafted in the Vietnam War and I believed him when he said he had forgotten to mention that he had been drafted in the Vietnam War ... I believe [Monica] Lewinsky was fantasizing in her twenty hours of taped conversation in which she reportedly detailed her sexual relationship with the president and begged Linda Tripp to join her in lying about the relationship. I believe that any gifts, correspondence, or telephone calls and the thirty-seven postemployment White House visits that may have passed between Lewinsky and the president are evidence only of a platonic relationship; such innocent intimate friendships are quite common between middle-aged married men and young single women, and also between presidents of the United States and White House interns.

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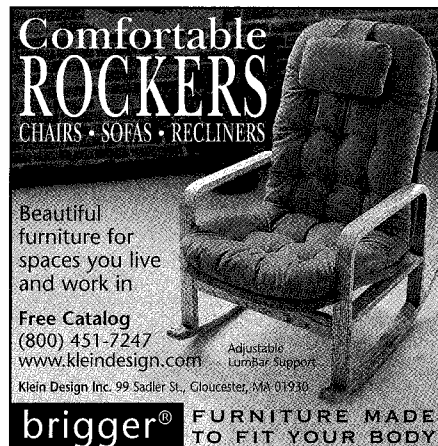
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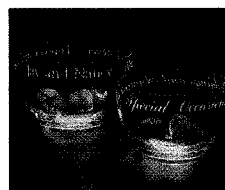
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Mike's *Washington Post* columns represent the part of his work that is most controversial. A number of readers, among them some of Mike's friends, found more than a few columns, especially the ones about American politics, to be too strident, too meanspirited, too conservative, and too obsessed with Bill Clinton. Mike always resisted being labeled politically—his politics were more complicated than that—and, unlike many of his columnist brethren, he never aimed in his reporting to service a predetermined point of view. And yet even he joked about "the good Michael" and "the bad Michael"—about the pitched battle between the author of the nuanced, empathic narratives and the fulminating prosecutor demanding Bill Clinton's impeachment over and over again: "He must be impeached not merely because he is a pig and a cad and a selfish brute ... He must be impeached because we are a nation of laws, not liars."

How, then, to reconcile the two Michaels? It is famously said that all politics is local; for Michael Kelly it might be suggested, with only slight exaggeration, that all politics is personal. Growing up in the shadow of the Capitol, studying senators and congressmen at close range over the years, he refused to accept the distinctions between public and private that have traditionally been drawn by the press. For him, how politicians behaved in their private lives was every bit as important as how they behaved in their public lives, if not more so. Thus the hallmark of a Michael Kelly political column, regardless of the issue on the table, is to affirm the essential inseparability of politicians and their ideas, of morality and ideology, of the content of character and the content of position papers. If some of these columns, particularly the anti-Clinton ones, seemed over the top when they first appeared, they now, on the whole, look surprisingly fair and reasonable—and they leave no doubt about their author's fundamental integrity and moral passion.

Mike "judged politicians as human beings," Peter Beinart, the editor of *The New Republic*, observed at a memorial service in Washington, D.C. "He believed that some acted with honor, and others did not. And the ones who acted

without honor in their private lives would act without honor in their public lives, especially towards the weak. For him, that's why Clinton's personal conduct mattered: because if Clinton betrayed those closest to him, he would betray Rwanda as well. That made sense to Mike because he was the same person in his public and private lives."

After Mike died, while covering the Iraq War as an embedded reporter, a number of obituary writers saluted him for his "fearlessness." But although confident of his ability to stay out of harm's way, he was very much in mind of, and concerned about, the inherent dangers. The quality that Mike aspired to was not fearlessness but bravery—which, as he told his young sons, was doing the right thing in spite of your fears. In a 1997 column called "The Fear of Death"—which paid homage to a small band of Bosnian resistance fighters, and which now seems poignantly prophetic—Mike defined what was for him the quintessential test of character. "Accepting death [is] indispensable to defeating death," he wrote. "We [Americans] are a nation in which there are fewer and fewer people ... who accept what every twelve-year-old [in Bosnia] knows: That there are things worth dying for."

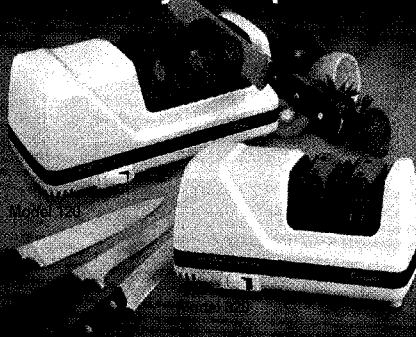
Six years later he elaborated on this theme in a radio interview he gave just before he died.

"One of the things I found out [in the Gulf War], which is quite interesting personally, is that people, at least men—I don't know about women—... go to great lengths in life to not find out the answer to the question, How brave am I? War presents you with specific opportunities to find out the answer to that question ... The question is asked for you and answered for you, in front of you and in front of other people. It's interesting, because you see it in all the people around you and you see it in yourself. And that's knowledge you have for the rest of your life." **A**

Robert Vare is a senior editor of The Atlantic and was Michael Kelly's editor at The New York Times Magazine and The New Yorker. This essay will appear in condensed form as the Editor's Foreword to Things Worth Fighting For, a collection of Michael Kelly's articles and columns, to be published this month by the Penguin Press.

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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

If the first presidential primary were held in the "most representative" state, which one would that be?

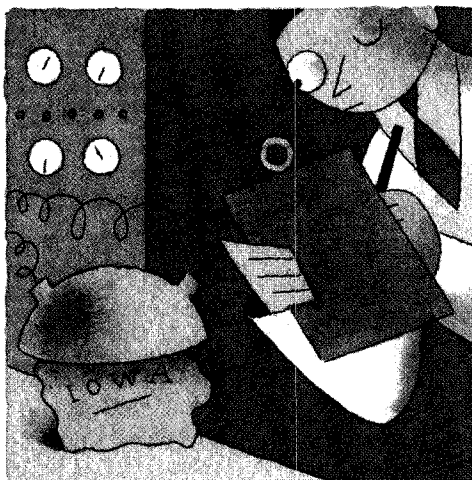
BY CULLEN MURPHY

.....

The presidential-primary season is now behind us, mostly, and the quadrennial hand-wringing has begun over the prominent roles played by the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary. It's not surprising, of course, that the candidates who fared poorly in these early contests would suddenly realize that Iowa and New Hampshire are profoundly unrepresentative of America as a whole. Iowans on average are more literate than the typical American, and they get divorced far less frequently. New Hampshire is tiny, rural, white, fickle, and flinty. Sheesh! If only they'd known!

But it's not just the losing candidates who weigh in. No sooner is the traditional first tally reported from Dixville Notch than the press corps heads south from its long winter encampment with a case of seasonal affective disorder or post-electoral *tristesse*. The litany of complaint grows longer with every presidential cycle. The columnist William Safire almost a decade ago called the New Hampshire primary a "media-saturated joke"; the state's citizens, he went on, are "over-exposed, over-pollled, over-campaigned upon." *The New York Times*, arguing recently for the creation of a "more thoughtful process," noted that there is nothing "historically sacred" about Iowa's "icicle-festooned precinct scrums." Appearing last January on *The Capital Gang*, Kate O'Beirne, the Washington editor of *National Review*, remarked, "The Iowa caucuses measure something. They sure don't measure the national appeal of a candidate." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, published in a mighty state that has

played no serious role in the presidential nominating process in two generations, was scornful of Iowa and New Hampshire. "They are such small states," an editorial observed in January. "In fact, with 2.9 million residents last year, Iowa was no more populous than San Diego County. With 1.2 million residents, New Hampshire was no more populous than



the city of San Diego." The former senator Slade Gorton, of Washington, has sonorously declared that "nonsensical traditions of presidential candidates posing for photographs in Iowa cornfields and eating doughnuts in New Hampshire diners are not a proper manner in which to select the leader of the free world"—a sentiment embraced by Senator Joseph Lieberman, of Connecticut, until he himself decided to compete in New Hampshire (and perhaps embraced by him once again, in the wake of his abysmal showing in that contest).

This year, a few days after the New Hampshire vote, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Terry McAuliffe, provided an opening for sharp criticism of the selection process when he put New Hampshire on notice, explaining that it had better vote Democratic in 2004 if it wanted to retain its first-in-the-nation presidential primary. The predictable cries of outrage from New Hampshire politicians and editorial writers were met by huzzahs from elected officials in Michigan and Pennsylvania, who pointed out that their states are considerably more reflective of America's diversity than the Granite State is.

The skepticism about Iowa and New Hampshire has its merits, no doubt, and when the national election is over, we'll hear about ideas for reforming the selection process. Someone will again propose a series of regional primaries. Someone will again suggest that the state with the highest voter turnout be allowed to hold the first primary next time. Maybe the honor of first-in-the-nation primary should henceforward be awarded alphabetically, starting with Alabama in 2008 and moving to Wyoming two centuries later. And so on.

But a central background question remains on the table. If Iowa and New Hampshire are unrepresentative of America (as obviously they are), then what is the most representative state? Michigan and Pennsylvania may be "more" representative than Iowa or New Hampshire, but are they *utterly* representative? If we had to select one state to stand for America in all its parts—the state you'd transplant to Mars to make sure our starter colony grew up just like the country we have here—which one would it be?

GREG CLARKE

If you start simply with core demographic characteristics, the answer is Illinois. The United States is 75.1 percent white, 12.5 percent Hispanic, 12.3 percent African-American, 3.6 percent Asian, and 0.9 percent Native American. The respective figures for Illinois are 73.5, 12.3, 15.1, 3.4, and 0.2. But a number of other states, though not quite so close on every measure, can lay claim to "ballpark" status on diversity: Florida, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Texas. And if you pick different data, different states emerge on top. When it comes to the urban-rural ratio, for instance, the U.S. average is 79 to 21. That's matched pretty closely by Texas and Pennsylvania. If you look at certain economic indices, Missouri emerges as fairly representative, with 12 percent of its work force in manufacturing (as compared with 11.7 nationwide) and 13.5 percent in labor unions (also 13.5 percent nationwide). Some 25 percent of all businesses in Missouri are owned by women; the figure for the country as a whole is 26 percent.

Some winnowing out is in order. Fortunately, most of these states have some disqualifying characteristic. Texas, by its own boastful admission, is not like the rest of the country; and indeed, it used to be independent. Florida, with no stable intrinsic character, suffers from dangerous weather and a skewed population structure; any reader of Carl Hiaasen understands that Florida is an outlier. Michigan's one major metropolis is in a state of inexorable decay. New Jersey consists essentially of suburbs, and as a media market is a dependency of Philadelphia or New York. Pennsylvania is surprisingly inert, economically and demographically. Illinois is just too flat—it lacks the highlander element that so often provides a kind of cultural ballast.

Which leaves Missouri, at the geographical heart of the continent, a state that straddled North and South during the Civil War and has straddled East and West since the days of Lewis and Clark. It's the state that gave us Harry Truman and John Ashcroft, Dick Gregory and Rush Limbaugh, Josephine Baker and Burt Bacharach. The population of an "average" American state (total U.S. population divided by fifty) would

be about 5.7 million; Missouri's is 5.6 million. The average state of the Union has 10.7 electoral votes; Missouri has eleven. The average state is 74,000 square miles; Missouri is 70,000. In the continental United States the average state with a coast has some 400 miles of coastline; if you count the Mississippi River (which is, after all, managed by the U.S. Coast Guard), Missouri has about the same. The people of Missouri have a distinctive manner of speech, but it's not the easily caricatured speech of Boston or New York or southern California or the South, or the affectless tones of the hyper-educated—it's closer to what foreigners think of as an "American" accent.

Spend some time crunching the numbers on Missouri, and here are some of the things you'll find:

	Missouri	U.S. avg.
Mobile homes as % of housing	8.2	7.6
% population under age 18	25.5	25.7
% high school graduates	81.3	80.4
% over 24 with 4 yrs. college	26.7	26.7
Cesarean births (per 100)	22.1	22.0
Infant-mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	7.2	6.9
% low-birth-weight babies	7.6	7.6
% in same house five years	53.6	54.1
% below poverty line	11.7	12.4
Retail sales per capita	\$9,482	\$9,190
Persons per square mile	81.2	79.6
Travel time to work (min.)	23.8	25.5
% children with Internet access	52.0	48.0
% children with no home phone	3.0	3.0
Hypothermia-related deaths (per 100,000)	0.2	0.3
Federal aid to state and local government (per capita)	\$1,258	\$1,233

That looks like a match to me. It may be worth noting that for more than a century in presidential contests Missouri has gone the way of the winning candidate more than any other state. Since 1900 it has voted "wrong" only once, in 1956. The *Almanac of American Politics* offers an observation that strikes me as a clincher: "An imaginary, flat map of the United States population, if everyone weighed the same, would balance near Edgar Springs in Phelps County, Missouri."

Edgar Springs: population 189. The town had better brace itself—it could be the next Dixville Notch.

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.

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TRAVELS

THE VALLEY OF THE KING

*Beyond a crack in the Afghan mountains lies a lost world,
the hunting grounds of King Mohammed Zahir Shah*

BY JONATHAN LEDGARD

.....

If you drive three days north and west out of Kabul, into the western range of the Hindu Kush, and pass beyond the district of Kahmard, you come upon a forgotten cut called the Ajar Valley. The peaks around Ajar are lower than those of the eastern Hindu Kush, but they appear to fall deeper. And they are redder and less visited, bespeaking Zoroaster more than Kipling. Soviet soldiers passed into Ajar for two or three days during their occupation. A score of them were killed, and others lost eyes or teeth to stones flicked from catapults by locals at night. Few foreign-

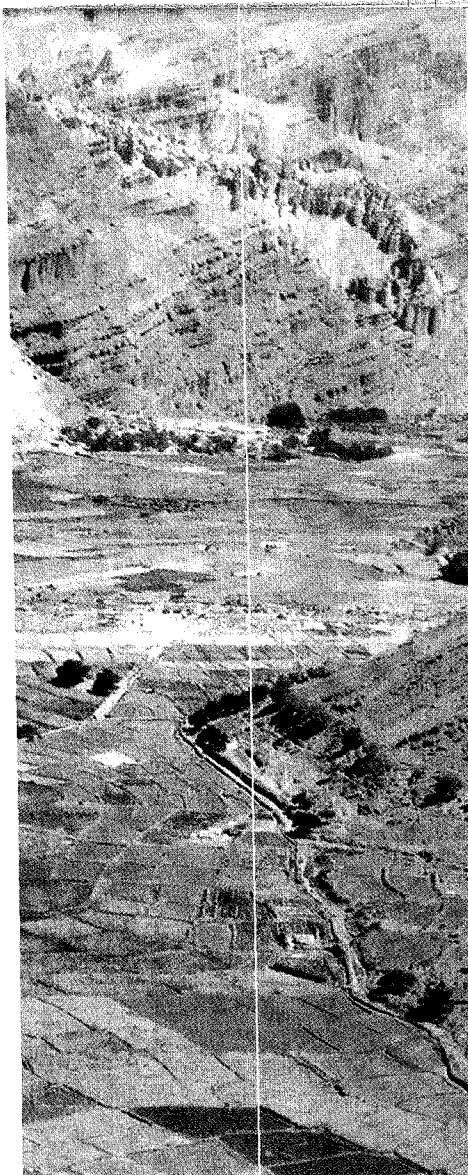
ers have entered the valley since. No aid organization works there. I decided to make the trip while serving as a foreign correspondent in Kabul. A few of us went: a driver, Shahgar; one of my translators, Bahram; Roger, a friend from university days in Scotland, along for an adventure; and Doud, a sinewy former militia commander who served us as a kind of bodyguard-guide.

Ajar was the hunting reserve of King Mohammed Zahir Shah from 1952 until 1973, when he was deposed and went into exile in Italy. The valley was gaudy in its plenty in those days. Local memory

holds it to have been the sort of Technicolor paradise depicted in some Renaissance paintings, or in the leaflets of more-determined Christian groups. There were abundant crops and wind-fall fruit for all. There were vines, flowers, songbirds of many colors, and fat-tailed sheep such as you find in the petting corners of European zoos. Ponies ran free, falcons fell, trout hovered in the river. Sloping down from a royal hunting lodge was a field where children played. Up above, on the star-swept mesa, was one of the largest populations of Siberian ibex in the Hindu Kush, and also good numbers of urial sheep, musk deer, wild boar, jackals, wolves, lynxes, common leopards, and snow leopards. To those the King had added, lower down, a number of yaks and a small herd of endangered Bactrian deer.

No one really knew what had happened to these animals in twenty-three

ROGER CAZALET



years of war. The United Nations Environmental Programme, mandated to assess the wildlife situation in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, in 2001, had not visited Ajar. Too dangerous, it said (hardly, although a few villages along the way had Taliban sympathies). Reports by occasional Afghan visitors suggested that the land and the trees were in poor shape, and that some of the animals had fled across the mountaintops, even as far as China. The Bactrian deer had certainly been gunned down, and it was also known that Communist Party officials had butchered the yaks and distributed the meat among the people. More than that no one could say for sure.

THE ENTERING IN

When the valley finally came into view, and we hammered toward it in our crowded jeep across the rutted flats, Ajar seemed like a play on words.

It looked as though Allah had left the valley ajar. There were two walls of soft red rock, each a half mile high, and they almost met and closed on each other; the entrance appeared wide enough for a river and a donkey to pass through, and no more.

The entering in was cast in shadow. This part of the valley was desert. Large lizards scuttled through talcum dust from boulder to boulder. We came upon an old man walking with the help of a stick. His wife sat on a donkey beside him. She covered herself as we pulled up. This is a reflex women have in rural Afghanistan. They pass into burkas and turn their backs on men (but also the world) the way hedgehogs roll into balls. They are impelled to do this. "Hey, grandfather!" we called. "Can you tell us how far it is to the home of Mir Abdul Shakari?" The old man thought for a moment. "Mir Abdul?" he said. "Five hours up the valley as I walk." Mir Abdul had been the King's hunter (*shakari* means "great hunter"), and we'd heard he might still live in the valley.

We moved on. Ajar opened out into a garden of sunlit meadows, fields, and orchards, fenced off on either side by billion-ton rock faces that changed color as they rose, according to the strata and the play of light; the whole effect was of bright slices of something like mineralized Dundee marmalade.

THE KING'S HUNTER

We continued up the valley past two hundred or so houses, some standing alone, others clustered into an impoverished village. The population of the valley amounted to perhaps 2,500. We stopped under a stand of pine trees. The few ruined houses beyond appeared on our Soviet military map as Deqan Qala, a settlement built by the King for his servants. We asked for Mir Abdul Shakari, and at length he appeared: a short man of about sixty-five with a snow-white beard and watery gray eyes like oysters, but also powerfully built and visibly hard, like a veteran legionnaire, so my first impression of him was unresolved. He was surprised and delighted to see us, and we him. We had not been certain he was still alive. I presented a letter of introduction from the

King, who had returned to Kabul after the Taliban's defeat.

"I have served the King all my life," Mir Abdul said quietly. "I continue to serve him to the best of my ability and with dignity." He led us up the valley to an orchard, and rolled out a food mat on which we sat cross-legged, drinking green tea and eating dried apricots. He looked at Roger and me wonderingly. "You two are the first foreigners to be sitting here in the King's garden since 1979," he said.

Mir Abdul had passed his childhood in Ajar. He had first climbed above the valley at age twelve. He went to work for the King at seventeen, and shot his first deer at eighteen. Hunting came easily to him. "Like pulling a plant from the ground," he said.

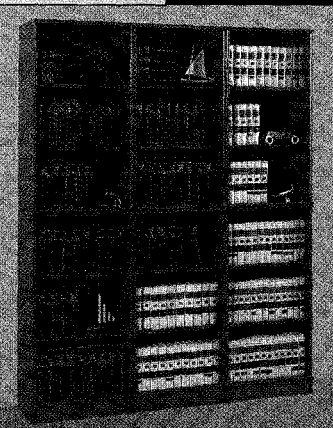
He was a prince of sorts, but he had no title, no claim to the land, and could not read or write. He lived in a tent at the head of the orchard. But all that he could see came under his sway. The apricot trees had been planted by his grandfather. The stone walls, and the roses growing from the walls, were the results of his father's labor. Hardly a person in the upper part of Ajar was not related to him. He had three living wives; another two had died from "pains in their chest and belly." Together they had borne him thirty children, twenty-four of whom were still living. The youngest, whom we could sometimes hear wailing in a nearby tent, was a teething baby girl.

It was a measure of the disaster visited on Afghanistan that a man like Mir Abdul was so close to defeat. It was not just that his eyesight was going and his hip scraped in its socket. He felt vulnerable. His family arsenal—seventy machine guns, five grenade launchers—had been taken, along with his hunting rifle, in 1999, when the Taliban drove him and his family from the valley. He had returned in glory two years later, brandishing a letter from the King. But the buildings in the upper valley had all been torched or broken, which was why his family had taken to living in tents.

He spoke with urgency after lunch, as we walked around the ruins of the royal hunting lodge. "We have been beaten and killed! We have no home,

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no animals, no seed. There is not enough food. Winter is coming. Tell the King we are desperate." Nothing was left of the lodge itself but a single bay window. A little distance away I came upon a rusting swimming-pool ladder curling up from the soil. The pool was buried below, waiting to be dug out. I stood there for a long while, imagining the King emerging from the blue water, slick and cologned, to be waited on by his staff—climbing out into a different Afghanistan, one that was just as hard but not yet broken.

HUNTING

As day turned to night, we talked in one of Mir Abdul's tents, pitched under some apricot trees. A single lantern cast a viscous light on the proceedings. My questions sometimes appeared to confuse him, as if he were dazed by his own history, but this was not the case when he spoke of hunting. His happiest memories were of trailing snow leopards, working out where they had been and in what numbers. He had killed three of them, and three steppe eagles, with a rifle that the King had given him. The last leopard measured nine feet from tip to tail. "The King was first in hunting," Mir Abdul said. "He was strong. He was brave. He took risks. We had the best times together."

Mir Abdul thought that most of the animals would return to the heights above Ajar. Many had never left. To make his point, he showed us the head of a large male ibex, which he said had recently been killed by a snow leopard up on the mesa. He held it up. The cat had sprung from the side and up at the ibex's throat. It had taken off and buried a side of meat, but left the head. The horns of the ibex swirled grandly. The taxidermy was crude: the sockets gaped, and the neck was stuffed with grass. I regarded the pointy white beard and loose jaw, and as I looked from Mir Abdul to the animal, my first impression resolved itself: the hunter resembled the hunted.

When Mir Abdul tired, his eldest son spoke in his place. His name was Sultan Aziz. He had a sorry story to tell. "Because we had no dogs in Ajar, I was trained as a boy to take the place of a

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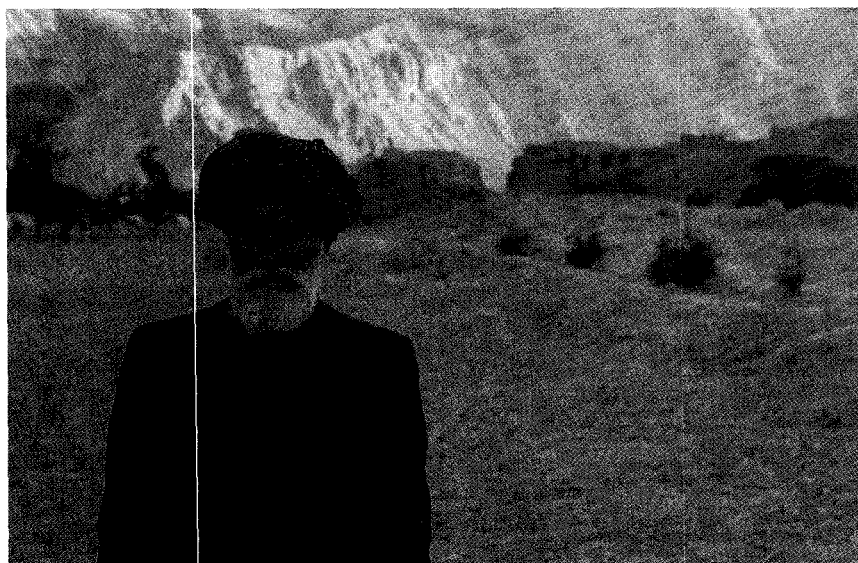
"Radio Daze"

This puzzle is LISTENER SUPPORTED. Across. 1. C(S)LEW + IS 6. S + AVER 10. LAD(IE)S 11. NEON + ATE 12. AN + ODE'S 13. (gi)ANTS 14. CA(DA)VERS 16. S(I)TING 17. P(A + RAD)E 19. DELUGED (pun) 21. S(PIN)ETS 25. TACKED (double def.) 26. PARTER + RE 28. SANDED (hidden) 31. CO + A + DING 32. GREASE (anag.) 33. E(MOTE)RS 34. (A)POLI(o) 35. DEN'S + E 36. ALOU + D Down. 1. C + LAWS 2. SIN + KIN 3. LEA + DON 4. WREATH (anag.) 5. SERENADE (anag.) 6. SORE (rev.) 7. A + D(VAN + TAG)E 8. (b)OTTO(m) 9. W(REST)ED 14. CHANCE (hidden) 15. SPU(ME)D 18. ADDI(C)TION 20. LI(TT)ORAL (anag.) 21. STAG ED (pun) 22. TANTRA (hidden) 23. AU + RIC(L)E 24. RECEDE (anag.) 27. PO(MAD)E 29. ADAGES (anag.) 30. MEAD + OW

dog," he said. "I ran after the birds shot down by the princes. On one occasion I dived into the river and pulled out two wild ducks brought down by the crown prince, Ahmad Shah. The prince liked me for doing this. He promised to bring me to Kabul and pay for my schooling there. Maybe I would have had learning ..." But the year was 1973, the King was subsequently deposed, and Ahmad Shah never returned.

A SACRED CAVE

We walked up to the end of Ajar one hot afternoon. Eagles turned on the thermals above. The names of the peaks around us translated as "Bald Bird," "Covered Eyes," and "Noisy One."



The King's hunter, Mir Abdul Shakari

The valley ended as it began, in a towering wall of rock. The valley floor stood at 6,000 feet; the rock gave out at around 14,000 feet. Animals had attracted the King to Ajar, but perhaps it was the defined nature of the place—the way it pinched itself off from the outside at both ends, suggesting a lost world—that kept him coming back. It was the East, but the East as West, before the West was won.

A seventeen-year-old soldier named Heyruhddin walked beside us, shouldering a Kalashnikov. His job was to guard the upper part of Ajar against poachers. He was under orders to walk twice each day from Deqan Qala to the end of the valley and back again. He ate what he could forage. Often he went hungry. "I

like Ajar," he said shyly. "I like the girls down here and the animals up there."

Close to the end of the valley was a rise of boulders, down which a river tumbled. We climbed up and were amazed to see a lake, as dark as slate. It had been formed by an earthquake in 1956. Mir Abdul remembered that day well. The whole Hindu Kush shook, he said. Parts of a mountain fell down, damming the river. It ran dry for three days. The trout flapped on the river's exposed bottom and then died. Even though some of the rockfall was dynamited away, allowing the river to flow once more, the lake remained.

We edged around it on a narrow ledge that dipped into the water here

and there, and found ourselves facing a cave called Chiltan, from which the river seemed to flow miraculously. The cave felt like the farthest point of our journey, and if it was not the source of the storied Oxus, it surely must have been the source of something yet more important—and if not that, then the very navel of the Hindu Kush. For years it had served as a shrine. The blind stumbled to it to find their sight, and the insane were brought from far away to recover their senses. Prayers were made manifest around the cave in little strips of colored cloth set in mud and cast onto the walls, like so much holy spittle. We looked respectfully into the darkness. Our guides told us that forty men of pure spirit were deep inside, wading through the waters.

They had entered Chiltan centuries before, and remained alive still, sleeping and praying until Judgment Day.

EVENING

I went with my fly rod to the river at dusk. I was a poor fisherman, and the fishing was poor. The trout had long since been diminished by grenade fishing. Children materialized as I cast, dark-haired boys with high Tibetan cheekbones, descendants, one way or another, of Mir Abdul. They watched me, and then I let each of them have a try. After some time we set down the rod, and I taught them to count to ten in English. Before the boys appeared there had been a single moment of stillness. Two young swans, gray like city snow, flew low over the water, touching it before rising above the valley and out of sight. Some elders lay on the grass a little downstream. I went to sit with them. Only a few had ever climbed above Ajar. The valley floor had its own pull, of poverty and land disputes, and the gravity it exerted was extreme, especially for women. No woman, the elders agreed, had ever climbed above the valley of their birth and looked down upon it (just as there had been no girls fishing, or learning to count).

NIGHT

The nights were extraordinary. Endless stars wheeled in the cold, silencing the rock. There were no clouds. I had taken along Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and had been dimly reading it. I had no sense of Ajar as a lost paradise. There had been no falling, no fall. It had been better; it could be better again. The people and the animals had been smashed by war, as had so much else in Afghanistan. That was all. But it was true that when I looked up, as I brushed my teeth in the stream by the orchard, I better understood the architecture of the universe Milton imagined, in which the world hung from heaven by a golden chain.

LEAVING AJAR

We walked out of Ajar early one morning. Mir Abdul pressed me to deliver his message of distress to the King. We gave Heyruhddin a cap and a little money. Other men stepped for-

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ward, some for an embrace, others hoping for a gift. The air was still. It soon grew hot. Flies glittered on piles of dung. We walked down the valley, rather than going by jeep, and said our good-byes to the schoolteacher and the shopkeeper in the village. The shopkeeper was covered in blood, picking apart a sheep carcass and holding court under an ancient mulberry tree. We drank tea with him, squatting in the dirt, and saw how the wasps swarmed over his meat, snipping off morsels of white fat and carrying them to their nest.

I hung back and walked on alone. I wanted to appreciate the leaving. As I passed a graveyard, a boy named Timur appeared from a grove and with great humility presented me with three walnuts as a parting gift. I sat down and cracked open the nuts against a rock. The graveyard was a beautiful place, whispering as graveyards do. The dead were marked at head and foot by slates. Their mounds were lanced with sticks of willow and poplar, each stick hung with brightly colored ribbons, like those spattered about the Chiltan cave. I watched how the light passed over the rock and listened, above the whispering, to the sound of a distant donkey braying and the sound of the river, passing new into the world, from darkness into light.

The place was worth saving—not just the heights but all of it. It had taken a generation to devastate the wild areas of Afghanistan. The pistachio woodlands of Badghis and Takhar were nearly gone. The mighty juniper forests of Kunar and Nuristan were going. Saving Ajar would not help those places. But saving it seemed possible in a country where so much was impossible: there were no land mines here; security was good. Everyone said that most of the trees had been cut down, that the twenty or so pines at Deqan Qala were the last in the whole valley; yet from where I sat in the graveyard I could see a good variety: mountain ash, hawthorn, mulberry, poplar, willow, tamarisk, walnut, apple, pear, and apricot. Some of them were turning. Winter was coming. But blue cornflowers and wild roses were all around still, and sweet-smelling white gorse in the ditches, and lavender in the fields.

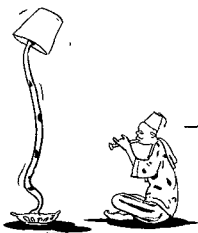
The jeep stood where Ajar changed back to desert. We packed in, and for a moment, as we turned through the shadows and saw the narrow opening back into the world, the outside seemed unreal, the bright sash of it like a backdrop in an opera house, hanging from sky to stage.

THE KING IN KABUL

A few weeks after returning from Ajar I went to see the King. He was delicate-looking. There was a plaster on the back of his blotched left hand. His trembling fingers moved through prayer beads that met in the colors of the Afghan flag: red, black, and green. He was eighty-nine years old, and a widower. He was not loved as he might have been had he shown more solidarity with his people during his exile in Rome. He had been respectfully relegated from monarch to father of the nation. There was little in his chambers to suggest a kingship dating back to 1933. The furniture owed more to Knightsbridge than to Kabul. The trappings of monarchy had been thieved. The archive had been destroyed. There were no photos of Ajar. The only remaining archive was the King himself.

I related to him the condition of his lands and houses in Ajar. The King replied a little indistinctly in Dari and Pashto. He strongly supported the idea of turning Ajar into a national park. "There is yet another tragedy in Afghanistan," he said. "It is the tragedy of animals. Now is not the time for hunting. Now is the time for preservation." He spoke of the lodge, the orchards, and the Chiltan cave. He most clearly remembered his hunting trips with Mir Abdul. "There were four or five of us," he said. "We climbed to the top. We lit campfires at night on which we cooked our food. Everyone told a story, whether true or invented. The social distance between us disappeared. We were just friends sitting together. Afghans. Equals." He paused and looked at me directly, as though our conversation had awakened something in him. "You know," he said, "those were the happiest moments of my life." ■

Jonathan Ledgard is a foreign correspondent for The Economist. He is at work on a novel about giraffes and communism.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

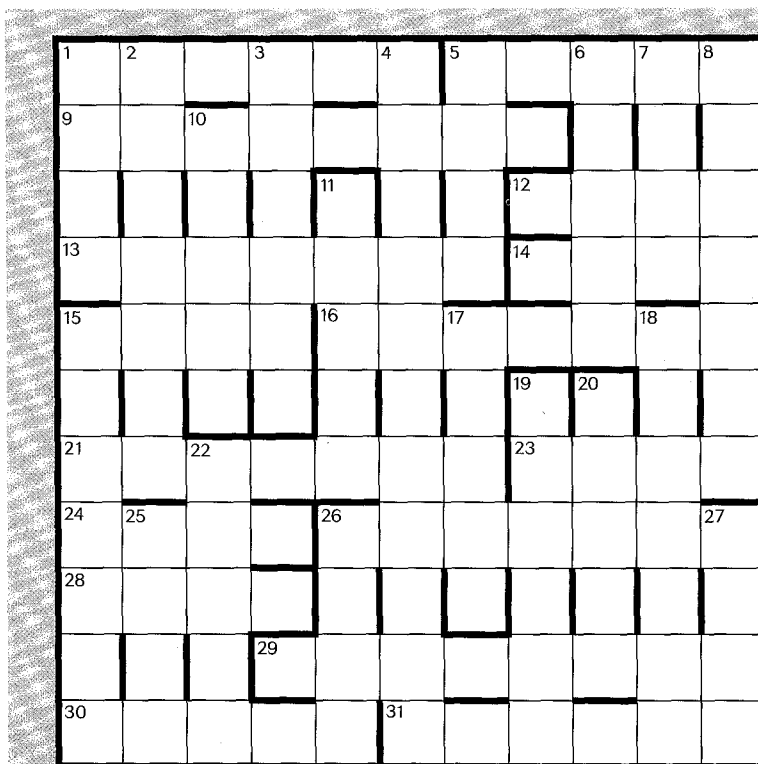
Help Wanted

Your overburdened puzzlemakers are seeking assistance and have placed a "Help Wanted" message in this puzzle's grid. Naturally, the message has been cryptically rendered to screen for qualified applicants. Because of the resulting alterations to certain entries, answer lengths have been withheld. Answers include eight capitalized words.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 152.

ACROSS

1. Encrypted the ad, keeping center separate
5. South American greeting bar fare?
9. Protect novel version of a utensil
12. Feeble-minded scoundrel holding box
13. Writer on either side of *Charly* producer
14. Playwright's suggestion after the premiere
15. Agents lifting units
16. Hauntingly beautiful English picked up by abandoned child
21. Buttinsky's broken promise
23. True to a listener's tradition
24. Drama about a patriarch
26. Be fascinated by noise engulfing hockey arena (*two words*)
28. Poet turned in the direction of actress
29. Reformulation of lens-care disinfectant, perhaps
30. Clobber heavyweight
31. Muslim doctrine is held by carpenter's helper

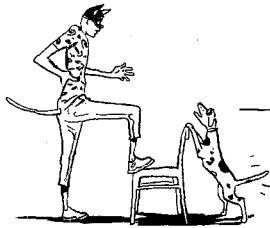


DOWN

1. Lower World Cup record
2. Terminate more masculine mammal
3. Grand gold rush
4. Wayward heirs share bead shops
5. Featured performer sings "Westbound"
6. Crumb in opening of soft drink
7. Floated vandal \$1,000
8. Greek character penetrating in gracious, artless role
10. Palm, perhaps, inserted in sort of pocket carelessly
11. Internet marketers of technetium in ruins
15. In audition, check flame's colorful display
17. Free ring set in favorite gem
18. Fixes pot payments, accepting two notes
19. Opera taking place among northern animals
20. Gaining interest, has kids spinning bright tops
22. Temporarily leave a jacket
25. A hot new word
26. Marketer of fruit parcel
27. Not one room is standard

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

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WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

KARL SUTTERFIELD, of Eastlake, Colorado, writes, "Is anyone else as annoyed as I am by being called a *civilian* by other civilians who happen to work for some branch of government? I recently heard an interview on National Public Radio in which Willie Brown, the former mayor of San Francisco, was said to be a *civilian* now that he's no longer in office. Give me a break! He was a civilian the whole time he was in office. If he hadn't been, San Francisco would have been under martial law."

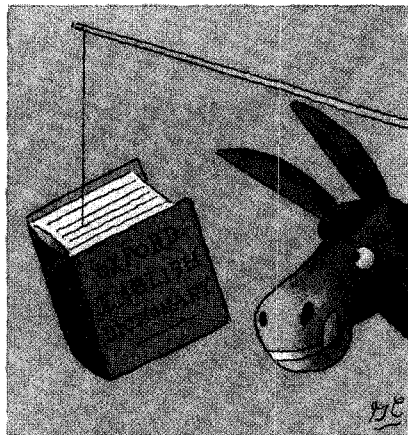
What is it about language that gets people so riled? You are right that in strict usage a transition to *civilian* life is something that people leaving the military or the police—not political office—undergo. Two of seven major contemporary American dictionaries, however, give "outsider" or "anyone regarded by members of a profession, interest group, society, etc., as not belonging" as an additional meaning for *civilian*. One of these, the *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, labels the use "informal," and the other, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, looks exceptionally kindly on informal English.

How formal and proper in their speech newscasters should be is a subject of lively concern among Word Court's readers. They often make clear that they think newscasters should choose their words with more care. Never mind that during the NPR interview Willie Brown, who had been affectionately known as "Da Mayor" when he was in office, mentioned that someone had just given him a cap emblazoned with "Da Civilian." *Private citizen* would have been a better term for his interviewer to use—but it would have looked awfully silly on the cap.

CHARLES HOGG, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, writes, "Many believe that they should 'reduce their weight' and 'lower their blood pressure.' What about anxi-

ety? Should they *reduce* or *lower* it? Increasingly I see *lower* where *reduce* seems more appropriate—for example, in 'lower the tax rate' and 'lower the risk of diabetes.' Do some contexts require one word rather than the other, or are we free to choose by ear?"

Yes, and yes. You'd *reduce* a sauce but *lower* the lights—or the bar. In the contexts you asked about, however, the words aren't so strictly differentiated. "*Reduce* anxiety" appears in print much more often than "*lower* anxiety" does, and "*lower* the tax rate" and "*reduce* the risk" appear much more often than "*re-*



duce the tax rate" and "*lower* the risk" do. But none of these forms is truly rare or indisputably wrong. Thesauri and dictionaries of synonyms tend to give the two verbs together, usually along with *decrease*. The choice is up to you.

IAN MORRIS, of Chicago, writes, "I'm curious about the correct usage of *carrot* and *stick*. I was taught that this phrase referred to the practice of donkey-cart drivers who held a carrot at the end of a stick in front of a donkey's eyes to keep him moving forward. More often these days, though, it seems that it's used for a reward-versus-punishment approach to a problem, as in 'If the donkey doesn't move

when we tempt him with the carrot, we hit him with the stick.' Which is right?"

A number of people have asked me to set the record straight about *carrot* and *stick*, and all of them have believed, as you do, that the two words together suggest temptation only, and that the popular reward-versus-punishment idea is wrong. Nearly all the available evidence, however, suggests that it's right, leaving me baffled about why the "carrot at the end of a stick" idea has so many partisans—indeed, any partisans at all.

No one knows where and when the phrase *carrot and stick* originated. But historical citations tend to be of the reward-versus-punishment type. For example, according to the *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins*, by William and Mary Morris, Winston Churchill said at a press conference in 1943, "We shall continue to operate on the Italian donkey at both ends, with a *carrot* and with a *stick*." Contemporary references almost invariably carry this meaning as well. Here is a recent citation from *USA Today*: "Steve Flynn of the Council on Foreign Relations said, 'The tool we need more than anything else [to fight terrorism] is greater international cooperation in finding who the bad guys are. That requires *carrots*, not *sticks*.'"

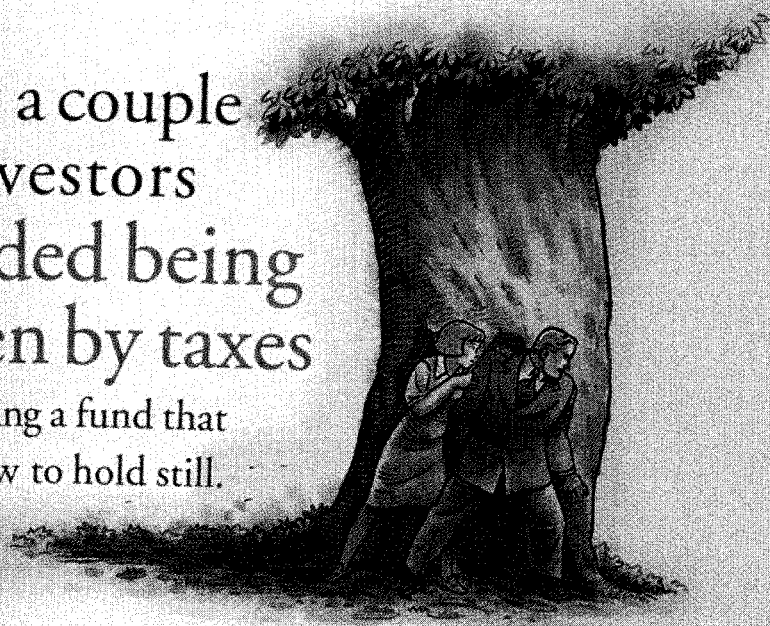
The history of our language is full of surprises and non sequiturs. For instance, one long-ago meaning of the word *stick*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was "a measure of quantity in small eels (app. twenty-five or twenty-six)." Language changes, of course. Even if—contrary to the available evidence—the first person to say or write *carrot* together with *stick* did have in mind the root vegetable dangling from a pole, that usage is well on its way to joining the small eels.

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

GREG CLARKE

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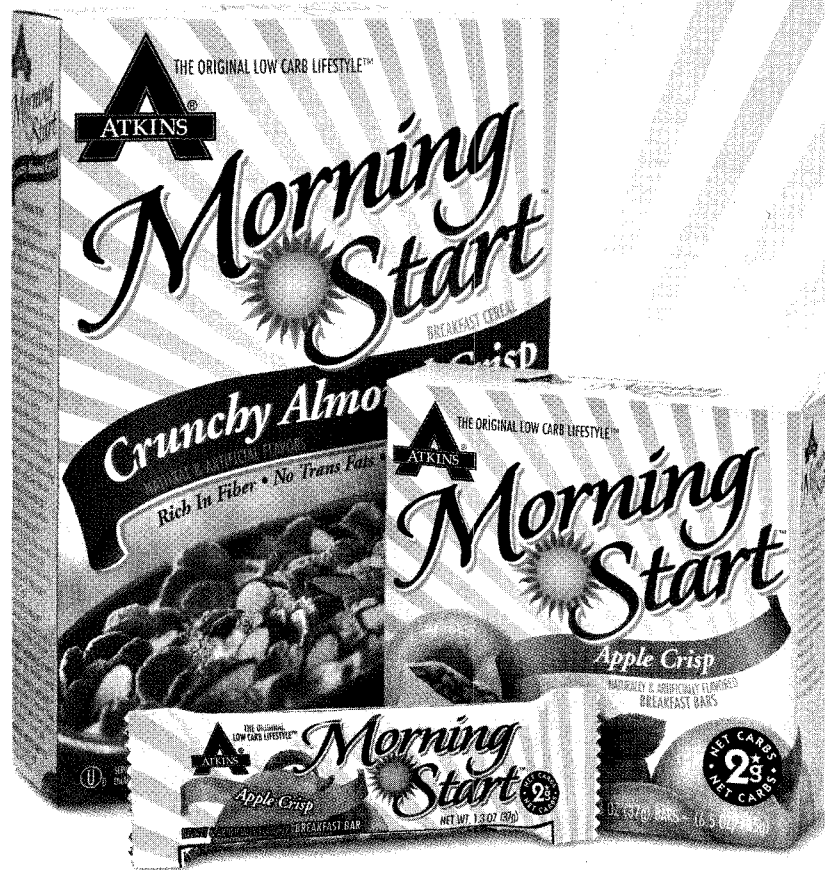
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